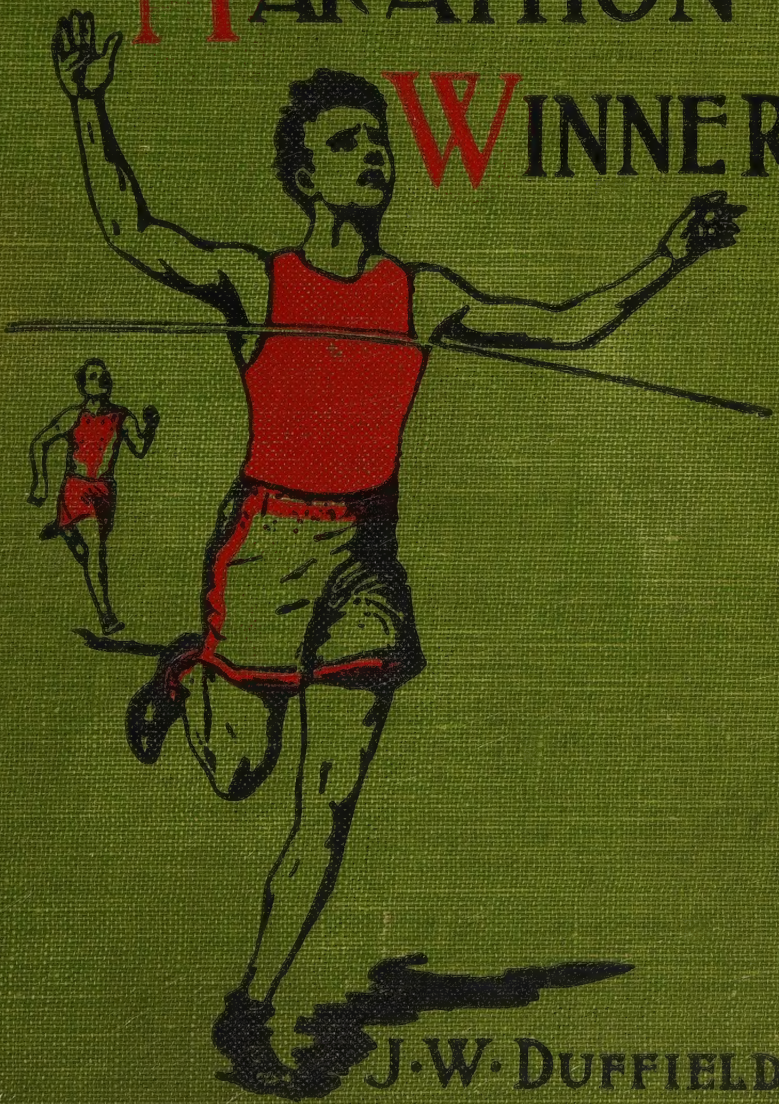
BERT WILSON MARATHON WINNER



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BERT WILSON, Marathon Winner

BY

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"BERT WILSON WIRELESS OPERATOR,"
"BERT WILSON'S FADEAWAY BALL,"

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BERT WILSON, MARATHON WINNER

CHAPTER I

With Flying Feet

A THUNDERING cheer burst from ten thousand throats, as the three athletes, running like deer, swung into the stretch and straightened away for home.

It was the last day of the intercollegiate meet for field and track events, and the most thrilling feature had been reserved for the wind-up. It was a modified Marathon of fifteen miles and the fastest runners in the East had entered the lists. Each college had sent the pick of its runners to struggle for the mastery, and excitement was at fever heat.

The stands were a mass of color, packed with the partisans of the various contenders and "rooting" fiercely for their favorites. The different events—pole vaulting, hammer throwing, broad and high jumping—had been bitterly contested, and the victories had been only a matter of inches. And now with the minor features disposed of, all eyes were centered on the most important of all—the long distance race.

A splendid body of athletes, twenty in number, had faced the starter, and at the crack of his pistol had darted off like greyhounds freed from the leash. They formed a magnificent picture of youth and vigor as they sped around the track. For the first mile or two they kept a fairly compact formation; but then the line began to lengthen. Some through weariness, others through craftiness, fell to the rear and let the others make the pace. By the time five miles had been covered, the sifting process began. Brawn and wind and staying power asserted themselves. The weaker or more poorly conditioned dropped out altogether or plodded hopelessly in the rear. At six miles from the finish, only five were left, and when they entered upon the last mile, the race had narrowed down to three.

In the stands Bedlam broke loose. The excitement that had been seething all the afternoon reached its climax. The frantic rooters hurled entreaties and begged their favorites to come on and win. Old "grads" worked themselves into a state bordering on apoplexy, while pretty girls waved their flags and joined their treble to the bass of the men. The tremendous uproar put new life and spirit into the tired racers as they braced themselves for the final sprint.

The race seemed to belong to one of the first two who were running neck and neck. Fifty feet

behind came the third. He was tall and splendidly built with the narrow hips and broad chest that mark the thoroughbred. To the ordinary observer he seemed to be out of it, in view of the gap that separated him from the two leaders. An expert, however, would have seen that he was running easily and had himself well in hand. At the half he lengthened his stride almost imperceptibly and reduced the lead to twenty feet.

Then something happened. The steady lope became a sprint; the sprint became a flight. He came down the track like a bullet from a gun, with eyes blazing, head erect and his legs working like piston rods. He seemed to be flying rather than running. Foot by foot he overtook the men in front. They knew from the startled roar of their partisans that he was coming, they heard the rushing feet behind them, and they called on every ounce of strength they had for a last desperate effort. For a moment they held their own, but only for a moment. With a terrific burst of speed that brought the yelling stands to their feet, he passed them as though they were standing still and breasted the tape a winner, in the fastest time ever recorded for the track.

"Wilson," "Wilson," "Wilson," shouted the wearers of the Blue as they poured down over the field in a frantic mob that threatened to engulf him. In a twinkling they hoisted him on their

shoulders and carried him about the track while their college songs went booming down the field. They fairly fought to get near him and refused to let him go, until at the clubhouse door he laughingly shook himself loose and went in for his bath and rub-down.

"By the powers," exclaimed Reddy, the trainer of the team, as he nearly shook his hand off, "you did yourself proud, Wilson, me boy. I'm not denying that me heart was in me mouth when the fellows were showing you the way to the tape. But I kept saying to myself: 'He'll know when the time comes to let himself out,' and sure enough ye did. Ye came down that track in the last lap like the Twentieth Century Express. Ye only hit the high places. I never saw such running in my life."

"Well," came the answer laughingly, "I'm sorry I nearly gave you heart failure, Reddy, but we win, and that's the main thing after all. I never felt worried myself for a minute. I was sure I had the other fellows' number as soon as I cared to let go. I could see that they'd shot their bolt when we turned into the stretch and I knew I had plenty in reserve. I had my second wind and felt as if I could run all day."

"They sure were all in when they staggered over the line," said Reddy. "Brady collapsed altogether and Thornton looked like a ghost. But

you're as fine as silk and haven't turned a hair. Ye look as though ye could do it all over again," he went on admiringly as he noticed the elastic step and regular breathing.

"No, thank you," was the response, "I'm no glutton and I know when I have enough. But now for the shower, Reddy, and then for the training table. I'm hungry as a wolf."

With his skin glowing and every muscle tingling from the vigorous rub-down, he stepped from the clubhouse only to run the gauntlet of the enthusiasts who had been waiting for him at the entrance. A mighty shout rose and hands without number grasped his or patted him on the back.

"What's the matter with Wilson?" they queried and the answer came in a rousing chorus: "He's all right."

At last he escaped from his rejoicing comrades, and in company with Dick Trent and Tom Henderson, his special chums, started over to the college buildings. The reaction from the terrific strain was beginning to make itself felt. But his heart was filled with exultation. He had fought fiercely. He had fought fairly. And he had fought victoriously. He had won glory for his Alma Mater and carried her colors to triumph. And just at that moment he would not have changed places with the President of the United States or the king of any country in the world.

"Gee, Bert," said Tom, "that was a wonderful sprint in the stretch. You didn't have legs; they were wings. Just as the other fellows too were thinking it was all over except the shouting."

"Yes," added Dick, "it would have been tall running even for a hundred yard dash. But how you did it after running fifteen miles is beyond me. By George, I wish I had timed you on that last lap. I'd have hated to be in your way as you came tearing down to the line."

"There might have been a mix-up for a fact," laughed Bert. "That tape looked awfully good to me and I'd surely have felt peevish if any one had hit it before I did. And it wasn't any sure thing at that. Thornton and Brady were certainly running some. I looked for them to crack before they did. If they'd had the least bit in reserve, they might have made it hot for me. But they'd killed themselves off in making the pace. I just kept trailing and watching, and when the right moment came I made my run. But they're dandy runners," he added, with the generosity that was one of his leading traits, "and in another race they might reverse the verdict."

"Not in a thousand years," maintained Tom stoutly. "They never saw and never will see the day they can outrun you. It's you for the Olympic team all right. There's no one this side of the

'big pond' who can make you take his dust."

"No," chimed in Dick, "nor on the other side either. There isn't a fellow who saw you run to-day that wouldn't back you to beat anything in Europe and America put together."

"Not so fast fellows," remonstrated Bert. "'Remember I haven't even made the team yet. This is only a preliminary tryout for the Eastern cracks. I've got to come up against the Western bunch and if all I hear is true they are going 'great guns' in practice. Then too they grow some speedy sprinters in the amateur athletic clubs —regular streaks of greased lightning. I may prove only a false alarm when I match my wind and speed against theirs."

"Yes," said Tom with fine scorn, "we'll worry a lot about that, won't we Dick? Didn't Thornton hold the American record up to to-day?" he demanded, "and didn't you run rings around him?"

"But this mightn't have been his day," began Bert.

"No," said Dick mockingly, "it wasn't. Suppose we say it was Bert Wilson's day and let it go at that."

Their faith in Bert could not be shaken, nor was this surprising, since it was founded on repeated incidents in their own experience. Again and again they had seen him put to the test, and

he had never failed to measure up to the emergency. Dangers that might have daunted the stoutest heart he had met without quailing. His physical prowess was beyond dispute. He was a typical athlete, strong, quick, muscular, and a natural leader in all manly sports. In most of them he stood head and shoulders above his fellows. He had borne off trophy after trophy on field and track. This alone would have marked him out as one to be reckoned with, but it was only a part of the reason why he was the idol of his friends and comrades.

His popularity lay in the fact that his splendid body held a heroic soul. He was clear grit through and through. His muscles were no more iron than his will. His beaten opponents often grumbled that he had no nerves, but they never questioned his nerve. He faced life with eyes wide open and unafraid. He stood on his own feet, asking no odds and seeking no advantage. He never quit. There was no "yellow streak" in him anywhere. To-day had only been one more illustration of his indomitable will, his bulldog tenacity. Add to this that he was a staunch friend, a jolly "pal," a true comrade, and there was no mystery as to the feeling his friends had for him.

None felt these qualities more strongly than his particular chums, Tom and Dick. Their friend-

ship was one of many years standing and grew steadily stronger as time went on. Every new experience tightened the bond between them. They had been with him on many occasions, some merely exciting, others attended by personal danger, and none had ever shown the white feather. In all their adventures, Bert had been easily the central figure. When as campers they had had that thrilling automobile race it was Bert's hand on the wheel that had steered the Red Scout to its glorious victory over the Gray Ghost, its redoubtable rival. In that last heart-breaking game when the "Blues" captured the championship of the college diamond, it was Bert's masterly pitching of his great 'fadeaway' ball that snatched victory from defeat before twenty thousand frenzied rooters. Only a few months before, when acting as wireless operator on that summer evening off the China coast, it was Bert's quick wit and dauntless courage that had beaten off the pirate attack and sent the yellow scoundrels tumbling into their junks. Small wonder then that they believed in him so fully and refused to concede that he could lose in anything he undertook. Mentally and actually they were prepared to back him to the limit. While delighted at today's victory they were in no way surprised. He "had the habit" of winning.

After supper, where Bert made ample amends

for the " short commons " he had been under while preparing for the race, Tom came into the rooms that Bert and Dick shared together, for his usual chat before bedtime.

" Mustn't keep you up too late, old fellow," he said as he dropped into a chair. " I suppose you want to hit the feathers early to-night. You must be dead tired after the race."

" Oh, I'm not especially sleepy," replied Bert, " just a little lazy. I had such a big supper that I'm doing the anaconda stunt, just now. I'm full and therefore happy. I'm at peace with all mankind. If I've an enemy in the world, I forgive him."

" Well, you haven't an enemy in this college world just now, you can bet on that," said Tom. " The fellows are talking of nothing else than the race this afternoon. The whole place is buzzing with it. They're sure that you've cinched your place on the Olympic team beyond all question."

" By the way," broke in Dick, " how did this Olympic idea get its start anyway? Who dug it up? Who saw it first? "

" Why," replied Tom, " it was a Frenchman I believe—de Coubertin or some name like that—who suggested it."

" That seems queer too," said Dick. " You don't usually think of the French in connection with athletics. Of course they're a great nation

and all that, but somehow or other they bring to mind high heels and frock coats and waxed mustaches and button hole bouquets. The men kiss each other when they meet and they cry too easily. They seem a little too delicate for the rough work of the field and track."

"They do seem a little womanish," admitted Bert, "but that is only a matter of custom. Don't think for a minute, though, that there is anything weak or cowardly about the French. There are no finer fighters in the world. They go to their death as gaily as to a dinner. No one will die more readily for an idea. A little theatrical about it, perhaps, but the real stuff is there."

"Oh, they're fighters sure enough," asserted Dick. "They're something like old Fuzzy-Wuzzy that Kipling tells about;

'E's all 'ot sand and ginger when alive,
And 'e's generally shammin' when 'e's dead.'"

"To be sure," went on Bert, "they had it handed to them good and plenty in 1870. But that wasn't due to any lack of courage on their part. Both sides fought bravely, but the Germans were better prepared. They caught the French napping."

"Well," said Tom, "it was this very affair of 1870 that started de Coubertin in the matter of

the Olympic games. He smarted under defeat. He got the idea that his people needed building up physically. It was shy on brawn and muscle. At first he had only the French in mind, but soon his plans took in other nations too. So a big convention of delegates met in Paris and formed an Olympic committee that has carried on the work ever since."

"When did they hold the first meet?" asked Dick.

"At Athens in 1896," answered Tom, "and it certainly seemed right that Greece, the scene of the old Olympic games, should have the first chance at the new. And everybody was glad too to have a Greek win the first great Marathon race. The excitable Greeks went wild over it. They gave him all sorts of presents. Some were of great value; others were simply comical. A tailor gave him a suit of clothes. A barber promised him free shaves for life. A restaurant gave him a dinner every day for a year and another volunteered two cups of coffee daily as long as he lived. One laundry did his washing free and another his ironing. Many women offered to marry him, but he turned them all down for the little Greek girl, his sweetheart, who had promised to say 'yes' if he came in first."

"Perhaps that's what made him win," laughed Dick.

"Well it didn't slow him up any," agreed Tom, "you may be sure of that."

"Since that time," he went on, "they have met in various places. We've had it once in this country, in St. Louis, in 1904. But whether held here or abroad, your Uncle Sam has been on deck every time. Our boys have taken twice as many first prizes as all other nations put together."

"That's a winning way we have," crowed Dick. "We're seldom far behind when the laurel crowns are handed out."

"The whole idea is splendid, anyway," exclaimed Bert. "The men that meet in the games learn to like and respect each other. When they once get together they're surprised to find how much they are alike in all that goes to make up a man."

"Yes," said Dick, "it helps a lot. I'll bet it does more good than all the Peace societies you hear so much about. It's bound to make us understand each other better. So here's to the next Olympic, especially its Marathon race, and may the best man win!"

"He will," said Tom, with a glance at Bert, "and I know his name."

CHAPTER II

The Deadly Rattler

THE days flew by as though on wings. Reddy brought his men along by easy stages. He was far too wise to be impatient. He believed in the old motto of "hastening slowly." But every day saw its quota of work mapped out and performed, and before long his persistent effort began to tell. The little group of athletes under his control rounded into form, and it became certain that the Blue colors would be carried to victory in more than one event when it came to the final test.

Upon Bert, however, he banked more heavily than on any other. He felt that here he had an ideal combination of brain and brawn. Nature had given him the material to work with and it depended entirely on the training to turn him out in the "pink of condition" for the decisive race.

Not once, however, did he let him run the full Marathon distance of twenty-six miles. In his expressive phrase it would "take too much out of him." From fifteen miles he gradually increased

the distance, until on one occasion he let him run twenty-two, and then he stopped him, although Bert protested that he was easily good for the remaining four.

"No, you don't," said Reddy. "I'm only asking your legs and lungs to make the twenty-two. The last few miles will be run on your nerve anyway, and I want you to save up every bit of that until the day of the race. You'll need every ounce of it when the time comes."

For Bert it was a time of stern self denial. As he neither smoked or drank, it was no sacrifice to be forbidden these indulgences. But the carefully restricted diet, the cutting out of the many things his appetite craved and had been accustomed to, the hard and unending work required to perfect his wind and develop his muscles called on all his courage and determination to see the thing through.

"Gee," said Tom one day, when after an especially severe practice they were walking toward their rooms, "I don't see how you stand it, Bert. A slave in the cotton fields before the war had nothing on you in the matter of work."

"Work certainly does seem to be my middle name, just now," laughed Bert, "but the pay comes later on. I'll forget all this slavery, as you call it, if I can only flash past the line a winner. And even if I don't have that luck, I'll have the

satisfaction of knowing that I have done my best and gone down fighting."

"You'll end up fighting, sure enough," said Tom emphatically, "but you won't go down unless you sprain an ankle or break a leg. The only question with the boys here is not whether you will win—they're dead sure of that—but whether you'll hang up a new record."

"There really isn't any such thing as a record for the Marathon," said Bert. "The conditions are so different in each race that no one can fairly be compared with another. If it were simply a matter of padding around on a flat track, you could get at the time easily. But the roads, the hills, the wind and the weather all come into the account, and they're never just alike. The fastest time so far is two hours and thirty-six minutes."

"The day you ran twenty-two miles, Reddy said that you were going at the rate of two hours and twenty-five minutes for the whole distance," said Tom. "That's some speed, all right."

"Yes," replied Bert, "and as far as feeling went, I could have kept it up to the end. Those last four miles though would have been the hardest and probably the slowest. But I never cared much about records anyhow. It's men that I have to beat. Time is a thing you don't see or hear and you can't work up much enthusiasm over it. But when another fellow is showing you the

way or pushing you hard, then's the time you really wake up. The old never-give-up feeling comes over you and you tell yourself you'll win or drop dead trying."

Just at this moment Dick ran up, waving a telegram.

"Hello, old scout," called out Bert, "what's up? You look as though you'd got money from home."

"Better even than that," answered Dick. "I've just had a wire from Mr. Hollis that he's on his way in the Red Scout and is going to drop in on us."

"Good," cried Bert, and "Bully" echoed Tom. "When's he going to get here?"

"Some time to-morrow if nothing happens. Say we won't be glad to see him, eh, fellows?"

There was no need of the enthusiastic whoop that followed. Their former Camp Master had always held a warm place in their hearts. A gentleman of means and culture, he had been identified with their plans and experiences for several years past. Under his wise and genial leadership, they had passed some of the happiest hours of their lives in the summer camp of which he was the ruling spirit. His help and advice had always been so sound and kind that they had come to look upon him almost as an older brother. While never indulging in the "familiarity that breeds

contempt," and firm almost to sternness when that quality was needed, they felt that he was always looking for their best interests and making their cause his own. And now that they were in college he had still kept in touch with them through letters and occasional reunions of the old summer campers at his home.

A host of recollections came up before them as they talked of his coming. They saw him as he faced the scowling mob of gipsies who had stolen Dick's watch and forced them to give up their plunder. They recalled the glorious outing that his thoughtfulness had planned for the orphaned youngsters of the county town. They heard again the crack of his pistol as he started that memorable race between the Red Scout and the Gray Ghost, and the delight in his face as the good old Scout with Bert at the wheel had shown the way to its rival over the finish line.

So that when they heard the familiar "honk-honk" of his car the next day and saw the Red Scout slipping swiftly up the drive under the elms, Mr. Hollis had a royal and uproarious welcome that "warmed the cockles of his heart."

"Say, boys, remember that my hand is flesh and blood and not Bessemer steel," he laughed, as they bore him off to their rooms.

After the first greetings were over, he came straight to the purpose of his visit.

"I ran out here to kidnap you fellows," he explained. "None of you look weak and wasted"—and he smiled as he looked at their bronzed faces, glowing with health and vitality—"and I don't have any idea that you're killing yourself with over work. Still, a few days change is a good thing for all of us at times. I'm going up to my lodge in the Adirondacks to get it ready for my family who expect to stay there this summer. I shan't be gone more than a week, and as your mid-term vacation starts to-morrow it won't interfere with your studies. It's a wild place there—no neighbors, no telephones, no anything that looks like civilization. The nearest town is fourteen miles away and I plan to leave the Red Scout there while we go the rest of the way on foot. We'll have to rough it a little, but it's a glorious bit of "God's outdoors," and I'll guarantee that you'll eat like wolves and sleep like babies and come back kicking up your heels like thoroughbreds. Will you go?"

Would they go! Could anything keep them from going? But after the first wild shout of assent, Bert's face fell.

I don't know just how Reddy will look at it," he said slowly. "You know how strict he is about training. He may kick like the mischief at my going out of his sight just now. I'll have to put it up to him."

So put it up to him he did, and that autocrat promptly put his foot down hard.

"Not for a minute," he snapped. "I wonder at your asking me."

But as he saw Bert's disappointment, he hesitated.

"Wait a bit," he said, "till I think." And he fell into a brown study.

At length he looked up. "I tell you straight, Wilson," he said slowly, "if it were any other fellow on the track team, I wouldn't do it. But you've never shirked or broken training and I'm going to let you go. You're drawn pretty fine, just now and perhaps a few days up in the pine woods won't hurt you any. I've been thinking of letting up on you a bit so that you wouldn't go stale. Just at present you're right on edge and fit to run for a man's life. Go easy on the eats and do just enough training each day to keep in condition. I don't mind if you take on five pounds or thereabouts, so that I'll have that much to work off when you get back. And turn up here in a week from to-day as fit as a fiddle. If you don't, may heaven forgive you for I won't. Now go quick," he ended up with a twinkle in his eye, "before I take it back."

Bert needed no urging and rushed back to his rooms with the good news that made his friends jubilant.

"Hustle's the word from now on," cried Tom. "Let's get our things together in a hurry."

And they hustled to such good purpose that within an hour their traps and outing togs were thrown into the capacious tonneau of the Red Scout and they piled in ready for the start.

Bert's fingers thrilled as he grasped the wheel and threw in the clutch. The noble car almost seemed to recognize its driver and flew along like a thing alive. The roofs and towers of the college buildings faded away behind them and their journey to the Adirondacks was begun.

The roads were fine and the weather superb, and they figured that if these conditions held out they would reach their destination the afternoon of the following day. An ordinary car with a mediocre driver could not have made it. But the Red Scout had long before demonstrated its speed, and under Bert's skilful handling it fairly ate up the miles that intervened between them and their journey's end. Of course they had to slow up a little when they passed through towns, but when the road stretched far ahead like a white ribbon with no other vehicle in sight, Bert let her out to the limit. If the speed laws weren't exactly broken, they were at least in Tom's phrase "slightly bent." Occasionally Tom and Dick relieved him while he leaned back in the tonneau and talked with Mr. Hollis.

At railroad crossings they were perhaps unduly careful, for all remembered that awful moment when they had been caught on the tracks and only Bert's lightning calculation had saved them from a frightful disaster.

"Will you ever forget," asked Tom, "how the old Scout bumped over the ties at the rate of a mile a minute while the express train came roaring up behind us?"

"Never," replied Dick. "More than once I've dreamed of it and lived it all over again until I woke in a cold perspiration. Once it actually seemed to strike and throw me up in the air, and when I landed I almost jumped out of bed. It gives me the creeps just to think of it, and I don't want anything more of that kind in mine."

"It sure was a case of touch and go," chimed in Bert. "I could feel the heat from the engine on my neck as I bent over the wheel. Of course we knew that the engineer was working desperately to stop, but the question was whether he could do it in time. If anything had given way in the Scout, it would have been all up with us."

"But she pulled us through all right," said Dick, patting the side of the car, "like that famous horse on his way to the battlefield:

"'As though it knew the terrible need,
It stretched away at its utmost speed.'

But we can't gamble that way with death more than once and hope to 'put it over,' and after this I don't need to have any railroad sign tell me to 'Stop. Look. Listen.' I'll do all three."

With chat and song and laughter the hours sped by. They were young, life ran warm in their veins, the world lay before them full of promise and of hope, glowing with all the colors of the rainbow. A happier, more carefree group it would have been hard to find in all the broad spaces between the Atlantic and the Pacific. Had any one told them of the awful hazard, the haunting fear, the straining horror that they were soon to undergo they would have laughed at him as a false prophet of evil. The present at least was theirs and they found it good.

At about two o'clock in the afternoon they reached the county town, and here they reluctantly said good-bye for the present to the Red Scout. The one road through the wilderness up to Mr. Hollis' house was a rough path to be trodden only on foot or, at need, in one of the mountain buckboards that could bump its way along over spots and around stumps that might have wrecked a machine. So after arranging for the care of the auto, they shouldered their few bundles and set out on foot. It was an ideal day for walking. The sun scarcely made itself felt as it filtered through the trees, and the balsam of the woods

was like a tonic. Long before dusk they reached the lodge where a good supper awaited them, prepared by the caretaker whom Mr. Hollis had notified of his coming.

The night came on clear and almost cold in that high mountain altitude and it was hard to realize that men were sweltering in cities not far away.

"We'll sleep under blankets to-night," said Mr. Hollis, "and in the meantime what do you say to building a roaring camp fire right out here in the open? It'll be a reminder of the old days in camp when Dave Ferris used to spin his famous ghost and tiger yarns."

The boys hailed the suggestion with enthusiasm. They speedily gathered a supply of dry branches, enough to replenish the fire the whole evening. Then while the flames crackled and mounted high in the air they threw themselves around it in all sorts of careless attitudes and gave themselves up to unrestrained enjoyment of the time and place. At last slumber beckoned and they turned in.

They slept that night the dreamless sleep of health and youth and woke refreshed the next morning ready, as Tom put it, "for anything from pitch and toss to manslaughter." A plunge in a nearby stream whetted their appetites for the hearty breakfast that followed, and then they went

out for a stroll, while Mr. Hollis remained in the lodge, discussing with the caretaker the approaching visit of his family.

It was a glorious morning. The dew still sparkled on the grass, birds sang in the trees, and the newly risen sun flooded the landscape with beauty. A mountain brook rippled over the stones. Partridges drummed in the tangled thickets, chipmunks flitted like shadows across the mountain paths, squirrels chattered noisily in the branches. Everywhere was life and movement, but all the artificial noises of the town were conspicuous by their absence. To the boys, so long used to city life, the change was delightful beyond words.

By the side of the path, about a quarter of a mile from the lodge, was a great dogwood tree snowy with its fragrant blooms. Tom reached up to break off a branch, but just as he snapped the stem it slipped through his fingers and fell in the bushes beneath. He stooped over to pick it up. There was a whirring sound, a rattle that struck terror to their hearts and Tom jumped back with a great, gray, writhing thing hanging to his sleeve. He shook it off and staggered backward, while the rattler instantly coiled to strike again.

CHAPTER III

A Run for Life

QUICK as lightning Bert slashed at the wicked head with a heavy stick he had been carrying. It caught the snake just as it darted forward and broke its back. It fell, twisting and writhing, and Bert throwing away his stick leaped to Tom's side.

"Did he get you, Tom?" he asked, with a horrible fear tugging at his heart.

"I don't know," answered Tom, trying to smile. "He seemed to be tangled up in my sleeve. Perhaps his teeth didn't go through. But I feel—rather—queer."

In an instant Dick and Bert yanked off Tom's coat and rolled up his shirt sleeve. Their hearts almost stopped beating. There, just below the elbow were two tiny punctures, fiery red against the white skin.

Like a flash Dick's lips were on the wound as he strove to draw out the venom. Bert whipped out his handkerchief and tied it tightly just above those ominous spots. Then he thrust a stick

through the folds and twisted it until Tom grew white with the pain.

Drawing his whistle from his pocket, Bert blew loud and shrill a series of short and long notes in the Morse alphabet that told of deadly need and peril. He knew that if it reached the ears of Mr. Hollis it would bring him instantly.

And now for a doctor. But where? He cast wildly about him and his heart sank as he realized that there was none nearer than the county town fourteen miles away. Fourteen long miles over a rough forest road. There was no telephone or telegraph in that wilderness. The only horse on the place was a sedate old brute who couldn't be flogged into a gallop. There was one thing to do and only one. He leaped to his feet.

At that moment an answering whistle came over the hill, telling him that Mr. Hollis had heard and was coming.

"I'm off," Bert cried to Dick. "Keep a stiff upper lip, old man," as he clapped Tom on the shoulder. Another moment and the woods closed round him.

Those giant trees, centuries old, had seen some strange sights in their time. Perhaps in the old days some Indian brave in pursuit of his quarry or himself pressed hard by enemies had passed beneath them like the flight of an arrow. But it is doubtful if they had ever seen a white man run-

ning at such speed as Bert's, as like a young Mercury with winged heels he rushed along under their branches. Life was at stake—Tom's life, he reflected as a pang tore through him—and he must run as he had never run before if he were to come out winner.

The road itself was a fearful handicap. It was little more than a woodcutter's path, ridged by deep furrows, dotted here and there with stumps, strewn with branches blown down in storms. Even where it was comparatively clear, the pine needles that carpeted it in spots offered a slippery and treacherous footing. Low-hanging branches brushed his face, long creepers reached out to grasp his flying feet. If he should once slip or trip or sprain an ankle—. He shuddered and ran on.

He had started off at a terrific pace and had covered three miles or more at top speed. Then the strain began to tell. His lungs were laboring and his breath came in gasps that were almost sobs. He took a grip on himself. At this rate he would collapse before he had gone five miles. He must husband his strength or he would never reach the end of his journey. And then——.

At the thought he slackened speed and fell into the long steady lope that yet covered the ground at an amazing rate. His breathing became easier and he knew that he would soon get his

second wind. Then he felt that he could run all day.

Now he had made half the distance and from the crown of a hill he caught sight of the far-off spire of a church that marked the location of the town. It put new speed into his feet and life into his veins. He would win through. He must win through. Yet through his self assurance came at times the terrible thought—suppose that after all he should be too late.

A fierce rage against the whole snake family took possession of him. Again he heard the blood-curdling rattle; again he saw the malicious eyes in which a devil lurked, the ugly triangular head, the long slimy diamond-marked body that turned him sick with loathing. He could have wished that all the venomous tribe had been compressed in one, that he might kill it with a single blow.

But he shook off this feeling. Hate weakened him—taxed too heavily his vital forces. He must concentrate on just one thing—Tom and the terrible need for haste.

Now he was running easily. His wind was in good condition. His legs had taken on new strength. The only danger left was the path. If he could avoid injury that would cripple him, he knew he could win. He had shed hat and coat and vest, had even thrown away his knife and

whistle to lighten himself by every ounce for the final sprint. A mountain brook lay in his path. He stooped, dashed the water over his head and ran on.

At last the woods became less dense. Scattered clearings here and there told him he was reaching the outskirts of the town. He passed a farmhouse, then another. He caught a glimpse of people at doors and windows staring at him as though at an apparition. A team drew hastily aside to let him pass. A straggling line of houses marked the entrance to the town. Just as he reached the main street, he caught sight of a doctor's sign, and dashing upon the porch hammered at the door.

The woman who opened it started back at the sight of him. He was dripping with sweat, his face was haggard and drawn, his eyes burning with excitement.

"The doctor," he gasped.

"Here he is," said a tall, keen-faced man, appearing at this moment. "What is it?"

Between gasps Bert made known his errand. The doctor's face grew grave.

"Sit down," he said, "and I'll harness up and be with you in a minute." And he hurriedly left the room.

But Bert was thinking quickly. Over that rough road and largely uphill, even a good horse

—and the doctor's nag was not likely to be a thoroughbred—would find it hard to negotiate the distance within two hours. And what might happen to Tom in that time he did not dare to think. What could he do? And then like a flash came the solution. The Red Scout! She could make it in twenty minutes.

Without a word he rushed out of the house and across to the combination livery and garage where the machine was stored. There it stood, the most conspicuous object in the place, with all trace of its journey removed and its cylinders shining. It was the work of a moment to explain matters to the proprietor and see that there was plenty of gasoline in the tank. He sprang to the driver's seat, threw in the clutch and glided swiftly out to the road. So that when the doctor drove around the side of the house he was astonished to see the great car come swooping down upon him.

"All ready, doctor," shouted the wild-eyed youth at the wheel, "come along."

"You'll never make it," he protested, "on this road. You'll split it apart. You'll tear it to pieces."

"We will make it," cried Bert. "We *must* make it. Jump in."

For a moment the doctor hesitated. He knew —none better—the need of haste. Still his own

life was precious. Then he rose to the occasion. His sporting blood was roused. He would take a chance. He swung his case into the tonneau and leaped in after it. "Let her go," he called.

And Bert let her go!

The doctor saw some "demon driving" that day. The great machine sprang forward like an arrow released from the string. The cheer that rose from the little knot of townspeople who had hastily collected was lost in the roar of the exhaust. The town itself melted away like a dream. The wind whistled past them with a shriek. In a moment they had passed the straggling farmhouses and entered on the road that led upwards through the woods.

Crouched low over the wheel to offer as little resistance as possible to the wind, Bert kept his eye glued on the path ahead. To strike a tree meant death. Collision with a stump would be wreck and disaster. The car lunged from side to side and the doctor, down on the floor of the tonneau, held on for his life. Again and again they grazed death by a hair's-breadth and escaped as by a miracle. Yielding to Bert's slightest touch, the Scout evaded a stump here, a gully there, part of the time on two wheels, again on three, but always righting in time. And all the while, it was climbing, climbing——.

Now they had covered three-fourths of the

distance and his heart leaped in a wild riot of exultation. He patted the wheel, soothed it, talked to it as though it could understand.

"Go it, old scout," he muttered, "keep it up. We'll get there yet. We're running for Tom. You know Tom, good old Tom. You've carried him many a time. Now perhaps he's dying. Hurry, hurry, hurry."

His own fierce energy seemed to impart itself to the car. On it went until it topped the rise of the clearing, swung into the road that led to the lodge, and with a triumphal blast from its horn tore up to the door. Before it had fairly stopped, Bert leaped from his seat and the doctor stepped down from the tonneau, his face set and drawn from the perilous ride.

"Thank God, you've come," cried Mr. Hollis appearing at the door. "I didn't dare to hope for you for two hours yet. Come in, quick."

There was no time for further explanations, but in the course of the fight for Tom's life that followed, Bert learned of what had happened since he had started on his run for help. Warned by the whistle, Mr. Hollis and the caretaker had hurried to Dick's side, and together they had carried Tom to the house. They had kept the ligature tight and had cut out the part immediately surrounding the wound. By the greatest efforts they had fought off the deadly coma, but, despite it all,

he was fast lapsing into unconsciousness when the doctor appeared.

Faced by a peril that he knew, the doctor pulled himself together and became the cool, alert man of science. Such cases were familiar to him in that wild district, and there was no hesitation or uncertainty in his treatment. His quick sharp commands found ready obedience from his willing helpers, and after an hour of the hardest kind of work the fight was won. Tom's pulse became more normal, his brow grew moist and he opened his eyes and smiled faintly at the group around him. The doctor rose.

"He'll be all right now," he said. "The fangs just missed the large vein, or he'd have been done for. As it is, we've barely pulled him through. If we'd been an hour later, I wouldn't have answered for him. We can thank this young man," looking at Bert, "for saving his friend's life. By George, such driving! I've never ridden so fast before and I never want to again. A little more of that and I'd be a candidate myself for the hospital or insane asylum. How we escaped being dashed to pieces I don't know."

"It was great luck," said Bert.

"It was great skill," ejaculated Dick.

"It was Providence," said Mr. Hollis gravely, and no one cared to dispute him.

After Tom was sleeping naturally and health-

fully, and Bert and the doctor had bathed and dressed, they sat down to dinner. It was a quiet meal as all were feeling the reaction from the tremendous efforts of the morning. But their fatigue was lost in thankfulness. They had matched their forces against death and this time had won. But by how narrow a margin!

Dinner over, they strolled down the path to the scene of the encounter. There lay the cause of all the trouble. The long body, as thick as a man's wrist, stretched out in a wavy line across the road. The diamond markings had dulled somewhat, but the staring eyes still seemed lit with malice.

"What a holy terror!" exclaimed Dick.

"Yes," said the doctor. "He's an old-timer, sure enough. He must be over five feet long and eleven years old, as you can see from his rattles. If you don't mind, I'll take these rattles along and hang them up in my office. They'll serve to remind me of the most stirring incident in my life so far," and he smiled, mischievously, at Bert.

"Take them and welcome as far as I'm concerned," said Bert. "For my part I never want to see another snake, living or dead, for the rest of my natural life." And as every one else felt the same way, the doctor neatly severed the grisly memento, to be duly dried and mounted in his sanctum.

Bert offered to take the doctor back to town in the auto, but the others put in an emphatic veto.

"No, you don't," said Mr. Hollis. "Not another thing for you to-day but rest."

"You bet there isn't," echoed Dick. "Even Reddy, tyrant that he is, would agree that you'd had exercise enough for one day. I'll take the doctor down myself. He won't go back as fast as he came up, but he'll be more comfortable. I always look out for the safety of *my* passengers," he added, with mock severity.

The doctor grinned appreciatively. "Slow down to a walk as far as I'm concerned," he said. "My appetite for speed has been satisfied for a long time to come. Any more just now would give me indigestion."

Dick's plan was to put the Red Scout in the garage, stay at the hotel that night and walk back in the morning. But the doctor who had taken a great liking to these young specimens of manhood overruled this, and insisted so strongly that Dick should be his guest over night that this was finally agreed upon.

"I'll bring you back in the buckboard," he said, "when I come up to-morrow to see how our patient is getting along. In the meantime, don't worry. The worst is over and it's only a matter of careful nursing for the next few days and he'll

be on his feet again. His youth and vitality and clean life, together with the 'first aid' you gave him have pulled him through."

"Not to mention the doctor and Bert and the 'Red Scout,'" added Mr. Hollis.

The doctor laughed and stepped into the machine. Dick took the wheel and the splendid car, none the worse for its wild ride, started on its way back to town, while Bert and Mr. Hollis, standing on the porch, looked after it almost as affectionately as though it had been human.

"Tally one more for the good old Scout," murmured Bert, as he turned away.

That evening, his face still flushed at the heartfelt praise of his host, Bert went in to bid Tom good-night. The patient was getting on famously, but the shock to his system still persisted and he had been forbidden to do much talking. But the pressure of his hand on Bert's and the look in his eyes were eloquent.

"Do you remember, Bert," he half whispered, "what Reddy said the last time you saw him?"

"Why, no," answered Bert, puzzled, and cudgeling his memory, "nothing special. What did he say?"

Tom smiled. "You're fit to run for a man's life."

CHAPTER IV

A Desperate Struggle

TOM mended fast, though not in time to go back with Bert and Dick, and Mr. Hollis insisted that he should stay a week or ten days longer at the lodge until he had fully recovered.

The precious week of vacation passed only too quickly, and promptly on the day that college resumed, Bert, faithful to his promise, was back at work. He had carefully kept up his practice, and this, combined with the invigorating mountain air, had put him in splendid shape. As he confided to Dick, "if he'd felt any better he'd have been afraid of himself." So that when he reported to Reddy and submitted to his inspection, even that austere critic could find no fault with the sinewy athlete who smilingly extended his hand.

"By the powers," he said, as he looked him up and down approvingly, "I did a good thing to let you go. You're fine as silk and trained to the hour. If looks count for anything you could go in now and break the record. Get out on the cinder path and let me time you for a five-mile spin."

With the eye of a lynx, he noted Bert's action as he circled the track. Nothing escaped him. The erect carriage, the arms held close to his sides, the hip and knee movement, the feet scarcely lifted from the ground, the long, easy stride that fairly ate up space, the dilated nostrils through which he breathed while keeping the mouth firmly closed, the broad chest that rose and fell with no sign of strain or labor—above all, the sense of reserve power that told of resources held back until the supreme moment called for them—all these marks of the born runner the trainer noted with keen satisfaction; and he was chuckling to himself when he snapped shut his split-second watch and thrust it in his pocket.

"He'll have to break a leg to lose," he gloated. "That lad is in a class by himself. I'm none too sure of the other events, but we sure have this one cinched. We'll win in a walk."

But while he thus communed with himself, he carefully abstained from saying as much to Bert. He had seen too many promising athletes ruined by overconfidence. Besides, while he felt sure that Bert could take the measure of any one now known to him as a runner, he couldn't tell but what some "dark horse" would be uncovered at the general meet who would bring all his hopes tumbling about his head like a house of cards. Too many "good things" had gone wrong in his

experience not to make him cautious. So it was with well-simulated indifference that he held up his hand at the end of the fifth mile.

"That's enough for to-day," he commanded. "To-morrow we'll start in with the real work. We only have a scant two weeks left before the New York meet and we'll need every minute of it."

And Bert bent himself to his task with such earnestness and good will that when at last the great day of the final meet arrived he was at the top of his form. Neither he nor Reddy would have any excuses to offer or anything to reproach themselves with, if he failed to show his heels to the field.

And, as Dick remarked, when they entered the gate of the mammoth park, it "was certainly some field." From every section of the country they had gathered—burly giants from the Pacific slope, the slenderer greyhound type of the East—some from colleges, others wearing the badge of famous athletic clubs—all of them in superb condition and all passionately bent on winning. To carry off a trophy in such company was a distinction to be prized. And, in addition to the ordinary incentives, was the international character of the event. Before the eyes of each hung the lure of a European trip and the opportunity of proving on foreign fields that the picked athletes of Amer-

ica could lead the world. Patriotism was blended with personal ambition and they formed a powerful combination.

Moreover, the chances of being chosen were much greater than is usual in such contests. Not only the winner in each event was to make the trip, but the man who came in second or third or even farther down the list would go. The Committee was not going to "put all its eggs in one basket." The chances of sickness or accident or change of climate were too many to justify them in depending upon a single competitor to carry the colors of his country in any given struggle. Thus in the pole vaulting, hammer throwing, swimming, hurdling, javelin casting, there would be from three to six competitors each. In the Marathon—most important of all—as many as a dozen would probably be taken. So that all were buoyed up by the hope that even if some luckier or better man carried off first honors to-day, they still might be of the elect, if they were well up at the finish.

It was a striking and animated scene that the great park presented. A famous regimental band played national airs and "Old Glory" floated proudly over the judges' pavilion. The stands were packed with a vast multitude that overflowed on the lawns, while on the inner track groups of contenders indulged in preliminary practice and loosened up their muscles before the games began.

Then the bell rang, the tracks were cleared and the throng settled down to watch the performance of their favorites.

Fortune was kind to the Blues that day and their number was hoisted more than once on the bulletin board. Burly Drake cast the discus one hundred and thirty-four feet. Axtell won the standing broad jump and set the mark at eleven feet, two inches. Hinchman was second in the half-mile, and Martin cleared the pole at a height of twelve feet, one inch. Bert and Dick exulted at the showing of their Alma Mater and Reddy tried in vain to conceal his delight under a mask of grim indifference.

At last the time came for the Marathon. Eighteen miles was to be the limit, as the Committee agreed with Reddy that the actual Marathon distance might well be deferred until the day of the actual race. It was a fair presumption that those who showed up best at the end of the eighteen miles would be best prepared to cover the full distance of twenty-six when they had to face that heart-breaking test.

A final rub-down and Bert was ready. A last slap on the shoulder from Dick, a word of caution from Reddy, a howl of welcome from the Blues as he came in sight, and he trotted to the starting line where forty more were gathered. He threw off his sweater, and clad only in his light tunic

and running trunks, with a blue sash about his waist, faced the starter. Like a young Viking he stood there, lithe and alert, in his eye the light of combat, in his veins the blood of youth, in his heart the hope of triumph.

A moment's breathless pause. Then the pistol cracked and they were off.

As they rushed in a compact body past the stand, a tremendous roar of greeting and encouragement nerved them to the struggle. In a twinkling they were rounding the first turn and the race was fairly on.

They had not gone a mile before Bert knew that he had his work cut out for him. It was not that there was any phenomenal burst of speed that tended to take him off his feet. At this he would merely have smiled at that stage of the game. Sprinting just then would have been suicidal. But it was rather the air of tension, of grim determination, of subtle craftiness that made itself felt as in none of his previous races. Many of these men, especially the members of the athletic clubs, were veterans who had competed at a score of meets, while he was a comparative novice. They knew every trick of the racing game. Their judgment of pace, based on long experience, was such that without the aid of a watch they could tell within a few seconds the time of every mile they made. Hard as nails, holders of records,

intent of purpose, they might well inspire respect and fear.

Respect—yes. Fear—no. There flashed across Bert's mind a quaint saying of Reddy's about pugilists: "The bigger they are the harder they fall." And he ran on.

Gradually the group spread out like a fan. None had quit, for it was any one's race so far. But stamina and speed were beginning to tell. That indefinable something called "class" made itself felt. Some were faltering in their stride, others laboring heavily for breath. Sometimes the laggards made despairing sprints that partly closed the gap between them and the leaders, but, unable to maintain the pace, fell back again to the ruck.

Running easily and keeping himself well in hand, Bert at the end of the twelfth mile was bunched with five others up in front. He knew now whom he had to beat. Thornton was at his left, and Brady a little in front. But these did not worry him. Magnificent runners as they were, he felt that he had their measure. He had beaten them once and could do it again.

On his right was a little Irishman with a four-leaved clover—the emblem of his club—embroidered on his sleeve. Behind him pounded two others, like wolves on the flank of a deer. One of them was an Indian runner from Carlisle, tall and gaunt, with an impassive face. The other

bore the winged-foot emblem that told of membership in the most famous athletic club in the East.

Mile after mile passed, and still they hung on. The little Irishman was wabbling, but still fighting gamely. Brady had "bellows to mend." Bert could hear his breath coming in long, hoarse gasps that told of strength rapidly failing. The Indian had ranged alongside, going strong. Behind him still padded the feet of the remaining runner.

At the sixteenth mile, Bert quickened his pace and called on his reserve. His heart was thumping like a trip-hammer and his legs were weary, but his wind was good. He left the Irishman behind him and was passing Brady, when the latter swerved from sheer fatigue right in Bert's path and they went down in a heap.

A groan burst from the Blue partisans at the accident. Dick hid his face in his hands and Reddy danced up and down and said things that the recording angel, it is to be hoped, omitted to set down, in view of the provocation.

Dazed and bruised, Bert struggled to his feet. He was not seriously hurt, but badly shaken. He looked about and then the full extent of the calamity burst upon him.

The downfall had acted on the other runners like an electric shock. Thornton and the Irishman were two hundred feet in front, while the

Indian and he of the winged-foot, running neck and neck, had opened up a gap of five hundred feet.

Had it been earlier in the race he would still have had a chance. But now with only a mile and a half to go, the accident threatened to be fatal to his hopes. The others had gained new life from this unexpected stroke of luck, and it was certain that they would not easily let go their advantage. To win now would be almost a miracle.

With savage resolution he pulled himself together. His dizzy brain cleared. Never for a second did he think of quitting. Disaster spurred him on to greater efforts. The Blues roared their delight as they saw their champion start out to overtake the flyers, now so far in front, and even the followers of the other candidates joined generously in the applause. A crowd loves pluck and here was a fellow who was game to the very core of him.

Link by link he let himself out. The track slipped away beneath him. The stands were a mere blur of color. At the turn into the last mile he passed the nervy little Irishman, and a quarter of a mile further on he collared Thornton. Foot by foot he gained on the two others. At the half, he ranged alongside the Indian who was swaying drunkenly from side to side, killed

off by the terrific pace. Only one was left now, but he was running like the wind.

Now Bert threw away discretion. He summoned every ounce of grit and strength that he possessed. With great leaps he overhauled his adversary. Down they came toward the crowded stands, fighting for the lead. The Blues tried to sing, but in their excitement they could only yell. The crowd went crazy. All were on their feet, bending far over to watch the desperate struggle. On they came to the line, first one, then the other, showing a foot in front. Within ten feet of the line Bert gathered himself in one savage bound, hurled himself against the tape and fell in the arms of his exulting mates. He had won by inches.

CHAPTER V

The Floating Race-Track

JUST what followed Bert never clearly remembered. A hurricane of cheers, a sea of spectators, Dick's face white as chalk, Reddy's like a flame of fire. Then the jubilant trainer thrust a way through the howling mob and led him to his dressing room. An immense fatigue was on him. His heart wanted to come out of his body and his legs weighed a ton. But deep down in his consciousness was a measureless content. He had won. Again the dear old college had pinned its faith to him and again her colors had been the first to cross the line.

A long cooling-out process followed, and then came the bath and rub-down. The strain had been enormous, but his vitality reacted quickly, and under Reddy's skillful ministrations he was soon himself again.

It was a jolly party that took the special train of the Blues back to college. More than their share of the events had fallen to them. Drake, Axtell, Hinchman, Martin and Bert were the center of a hilarious group, who kept demanding at

short intervals "who was all right" and answering the questions themselves by shouting the names of their victorious athletes. Not since that memorable day when Bert's fadeaway ball had won the pennant had their cup of satisfaction been so full to overflowing.

The lion's share of the applause naturally fell to Bert, not only because the Marathon was more important than any other feature, but on account of the accident that had come so near to ruining his hopes and which he had so gallantly retrieved.

"Gee, Bert," said Dick, "I can't tell you how I felt when I saw you go down in that mix-up. Just when you were getting ready to make your run, too. I'd been studying your gait right along and I knew by the way you were going that you had plenty in reserve. I was counting the race already won. But when you went into that tangle of legs and arms, I figured that it was all up with us."

"I thought so myself," answered Bert, "that is, as soon as I could think anything. At first my head went round like a top, and for a second or two I didn't know where I was. Then I saw the heels of the fellows way up in front and I made up my mind that they should see mine."

"And they did all right," chuckled Drake, "but it was a hundred to one shot that they wouldn't. That run of yours was the pluckiest

thing I ever saw, as well as the speediest. Like the 'Charge of the Light Brigade,' it sure was a forlorn hope."

"Well," said Bert, "it's like baseball. The game's never over until the last man is out in the ninth inning, no matter how far the other fellows may be ahead. As it was, I only got there by the narrowest of squeaks. That winged-foot fellow put up a nervy fight. By the way, how is Brady? I hope he wasn't hurt by the tumble."

"Oh, he's all right," answered Axtell. "He scraped a big patch of skin off his thigh, but he came staggering along and finished among the first ten. The showing he made was good enough to guarantee that he'll be taken along with the rest of us."

But just then Reddy the tyrant—a very good-natured tyrant at present—intervened, and although they protested that they were too excited to sleep, shooed them off to their berths.

"Tell that to the marines," he grinned. "Ye'll be asleep before your head fairly touches the pillow." And, as usual in things physical, Reddy was right.

The next few weeks were exceedingly busy ones. Examinations were coming on and Bert was up to his eyes in work. He had never let sport interfere with his studies and his standing in the class room had been as high as his reputation on the

track. Then there were the countless odds and ends to be attended to that always accumulate at the end of the college year. Every day, without fail, Reddy put him through his paces, having in mind the forthcoming ocean voyage when regular training would be difficult and limited.

Tom in the meantime had returned, still bearing some traces of his terrible ordeal in the mountains. The poison had been eliminated from his system, thanks to the doctor's skill and the careful oversight of Mr. Hollis, but he was not yet his former self. It had been decided that a sea trip was the one thing needed to bring about his entire restoration to health. Dick had no such excuse, but he had put it up to his parents with so much force that he simply *must* see the Olympics that they had at last consented. By dint of much correspondence and influence exerted in the right quarters, they had been able to arrange for passage on the same steamer that was to convey Bert and the rest of the Olympic team. So that the "Three Guardsmen," as they had been dubbed because they were always together, rejoiced at the prospect of a summer abroad under these rare conditions. And there were no happier young fellows than they in America on that memorable day when they went over the gang-plank of the steamer that was to carry them and their fortunes.

The *Northland* had been specially chartered

for the occasion. The contestants alone numbered nearly two hundred, and when to these were added trainers, rubbers, reporters, officials and favored friends, this figure was more than doubled. The Olympic Committee had done things in lavish style, and the funds contributed by lovers of sport all over the country had given them abundance of means. They had learned from previous experience the disadvantages of having the athletes go over on the regular liners. The rich food of the ship's tables, the formality that had to be observed, the class distinctions of first, second and third cabins and the difficulty of keeping in condition had wrecked or lessened the chances of more than one promising candidate.

Now, with the vessel absolutely under their own control, subject of course to the captain and officers, all these troubles disappeared. There were no cabin distinctions and all were on the same level. The food, while of course of the very best quality and wholesome and abundant, was prepared with a special view to the needs of the athletes. There was no fixed schedule for the trip, and therefore no danger of overspeeding in order to reach port on time. Snobbishness and pretense were altogether absent. All were enthusiasts on athletics, all keenly interested in the coming games, and the healthy freemasonry of sport welded them into one great family. The boys

had not been on board an hour before they felt perfectly at home. At every turn they met some one whom they knew more or less well from having already met them in competition. There was Brady and Thornton and Casey, the little Irishman; and even the Indian, who had given Bert so much trouble to beat him, so far unbent from his usual gravity as to grin a welcome to his conqueror. The winged-foot man, Hallowell, shook hands cordially with a grip that bore no malice.

"The best man won that day," he smiled, "but I'm from Missouri and you'll have to show me that you can do it again."

"Your turn next," laughed Bert. "That was simply my lucky day."

"I think next time," continued Hallowell, "in addition to the winged-foot emblem, I'd better carry a rabbit's foot."

"Don't handicap me that way," said Bert, in mock alarm. "Why rob me altogether of hope?"

"Well," concluded Hallowell, "as long as America wins, it doesn't matter much which one of us 'brings home the bacon.'"

"Right you are," rejoined Bert, heartily.

And this spirit prevailed everywhere. Rivalry was keen, but it was not bitter. There was no malice or meanness about it. Each could admire and applaud the prowess of a rival. Naturally

every one wanted to win, but above the personal feeling rose the national. As long as America won, nothing else mattered very much. "Old Glory" floated from the stem and stern of the great steamer. It floated also in their hearts.

The *Northland* had been put in the Committee's hands some weeks previous to the time of sailing, and in that brief period they had worked wonders. The ship had been transformed into an immense gymnasium. It was intended that regular practice should be indulged in every day of the trip when the weather permitted. Of course, as "all signs fail in dry weather," so all exercise would have to be suspended in stormy weather. But at that time of the year storms were infrequent on the Atlantic, and it was probable that there would be little loss of time on that account.

On the upper deck the Committee had built a cork track three hundred feet long and wide enough for two men to run abreast. This was for the use chiefly of the sprinters, although all found it valuable for limbering up, and even the milers and long-distance men could use it to advantage. The deck itself was a fifth of a mile in circumference and here the Marathon men took their practice. It was planned that there should be two sessions every day, the first at ten in the morning and the second at three in the afternoon.

But running was not allowed to eclipse the other features. The rifle and revolver men had a special gallery where they practised steadily. The bicycle team were provided with machines lashed securely to the stanchions of the vessel. Here they pedaled away religiously, working like beavers yet never getting anywhere. But the practice itself was almost as good as though the miles were actually spinning away behind them. The tennis men had a backstop ten feet high and an imaginary court where they practiced what strokes they could. The fencing team had not been overlooked, and especially well-lighted quarters had been assigned to them.

For the swimmers there was a canvas tank, replenished daily, fifteen feet long and five wide. A belt about the swimmer's waist was tied to a rope above that held him in the center of the tank. So that while, like the bicycle team, getting nowhere, they could yet go through the motions and keep in perfect condition.

The throwers of the discus and the hammer were naturally at some disadvantage. There was not enough open space anywhere in the ship for them to try out their specialties. But they were not to be wholly denied. A section of the rail at the stern of the ship was removed, and fastening the discus or hammer to a rope, they cast it out over the waves as far as they could

and then drew it back, repeating the feat as often as their trainers deemed best.

Then, in addition to these special arrangements, there were the general ones in which all took part, such as chinning the bar, skipping the rope and passing the medicine ball. The entire schedule was a tribute to the ingenuity and thoroughness of the Committee. In the period devoted to practice every chink of time was filled up and, as Dick put it, "no guilty minute was permitted to escape."

But work had no terrors for these husky youth. It was by dint of hard work that they had reached their present position in the athletic world, and now, with the greatest possible prize in view, they were in no mood to let up. Some, in fact, had been worrying over the prospect of a break in training during the voyage and they were delighted to find that their fears were groundless.

It is safe to say that no one ship since the world began had carried so much brawn and skill and speed as did the *Northland*. It carried more—the faith and hope and pride of the American people. And when, the next day, with whistles blowing and flags flying and bands playing and crowds cheering, she passed down the bay and stood out to sea, none doubted that the bronzed athletes she bore would return crowned with the laurels of victory.

CHAPTER VI

Off for the Fight

THE boys stood leaning on the rail as the stately steamer passed through the vast array of shipping on either side of the river, slipped by the colossal figure of Liberty and, bidding farewell to the Sandy Hook lightship, breasted the waves of the Atlantic. They were ardent patriots, and, as the irregular skyline of the great city faded from their view, they felt the pang that always comes to one on leaving his native land. But in the "bright lexicon of youth" there's no such word as melancholy, and as they thought of all that lay before them their hearts swelled with anticipation. Adventure beckoned them, glory tempted them, hope inspired them.

"We're starting out with colors flying," said Dick. "Here's hoping we come back the same way."

"If we don't it'll be the first fizzle," said Bert. "This is the fourth time Uncle Sam has sent his boys abroad and they've never yet come back empty-handed."

"Yes," added Tom, "they've never had to slink back and spend the rest of their lives explaining why they didn't win. It has always been the glad hand and the big eats and the brass bands and the procession down Broadway."

"I can see Bert already sitting in one of the swell buzz-wagons with the Marathon prize alongside of him and trying to look unconcerned," chaffed Dick.

"You've got good eyesight," retorted Bert, drily. "I may be only one of the 'also rans.'"

"Such shrinking modesty," mocked Tom. "Tell that to the King of Denmark."

"Speaking of kings," went on Dick, "I suppose we'll see plenty of them on the other side."

"Likely enough," said Bert. "There were several of them at the last games. As for princes and dukes, they'll be thick as blackberries. Perhaps we ought to be overwhelmed at the prospect of seeing so many high mightinesses, but somehow I can't get much worked up over it."

"Neither can I," said Dick. "I'm afraid I haven't much more reverence than the old sailor on an American ship that was being inspected by a lot of royalties. He came up to the captain and touched his cap. 'Beggin' your pardon, capting,' he said, 'but one of them there kings has fell down the hatchway.'"

"Well," returned Bert, when the laugh had

subsided, "some of 'them there kings' are pretty decent fellows, after all. The German Emperor, for instance, is all right. Nobody in Germany works harder than he does. He's always on the job and even if we don't agree with his views we have to hand it to him. He's the biggest figure in Europe to-day. I like him because he isn't a mere figurehead like the rest of them. He throws himself right into the game and he's there all the time from start to finish. He's taking a lot of interest in the Olympics and I hear he's going to open them in person. And no doubt he'll be the one to give out the prizes at the end."

"Well, if he does he'll have a chance to shake hands with quite a bunch of American sovereigns," said Dick, "for there'll surely be a big raft of them up there standing in line when the trophies are handed out."

"The Germans are certainly making great preparations for the games," said Tom. "I hear that the stadium at Berlin is going to be the biggest thing in that line that ever happened. They dedicated it the other day and all Berlin turned out to see it. The Kaiser himself was there and made a speech, and just as he got through they released thirty thousand doves who flew in a great white cloud over the field. Rather artistic idea you see—'the dove of peace,' and all that sort of thing."

"The idea is all right," rejoined Dick, cynically, "and yet you notice that England keeps building dreadnoughts, and France is increasing her term of service from two years to three, and Germany herself this year is raising an extra billion of marks for new troops. The ideas don't jibe very well, do they?"

"No," assented Bert. "When I hear them talk of doing away with war altogether, I think of that saying of Mark Twain's that 'the day may come when the lion and the lamb will lie down together, but the lamb will be inside.'"

"Don't say anything that suggests eating," chimed in Tom, "for this sea air is making me feel already as though I were starving to death."

"That's your normal state, anyway," laughed Dick. "Don't try to put it off on the air. But there goes the steward's gong now. Let's go down and see what kind of a training table they set."

A very good table they found it to be, despite the absence of luxuries that are usually to be found on ocean liners. Wines and liquors of all kinds were banished, together with rich pastries and many kinds of starchy foods. But there was a royal abundance of meats and fruit desserts that made them forget the absence of the richer indigestibles. And the way the food melted away

before the onslaught of these trained athletes made the stewards gasp.

"Let us eat, drink and be merry," quoted Drake, "for to-morrow we get seasick."

"Don't tell that to able-bodied sailors like us," retorted Dick. "We got our sea legs long ago on the Pacific. After the typhoon we went through off the Japanese coast, I don't think that any shindig the Atlantic can kick up will worry us much."

"Well, you're lucky in having served your apprenticeship," returned Drake, "but for lots of the fellows this is their first trip and it's a pretty safe bet that there won't be as many at the dinner table to-morrow as there are to-day."

"Oh, I don't think it will bother them," said Bert. "It's the fellows with a paunch who have been living high that usually pay the penalty when they tackle a sea trip. Our boys are in such splendid shape that it probably won't upset them."

After dinner they made the round of the ship. Training was not to start until the next morning, and the rest of the day was theirs to do with as they liked.

As compared with the *Fearless,* the steamer on which they had made the voyage to China, the *Northland* was a giant. Apart from the splendid athletic equipment that made it unique, it ranked with the finest of the Atlantic liners. The great

prow towered forty feet above the water. The ship was over seven hundred feet in length and nearly eighty feet wide. Great decks towered one above the other until it resembled a skyscraper. She was driven by powerful double screw engines of the latest type that could develop thirty-six thousand horsepower and were good for over twenty knots an hour. The saloons and cabins were the last word in ocean luxury. Ample provision had been made for safety. There were enough lifeboats and collapsible rafts, including two motor boats, to take care of every one of the passengers and crew in case of need. The lesson of the *Titanic* disaster had not been forgotten, and there was a double hull extending the whole length of the ship, so that if one were ripped open the other would probably be left intact. There were thirty-two water-tight compartments divided by steel bulkheads that could be closed in an instant by pressing a button either from the bridge or the engine room. The bridge itself was eighty feet above sea level, and it made the boys dizzy to look down at the great swells that slipped away smoothly on either side of the prow. Her length enabled her to cut into three waves at once so that the tossing motion was hardly perceptible. She rode the waters like a veritable queen of the sea. Her captain was a grizzled old veteran, who had been thirty years in the com-

pany's employ and enjoyed their fullest confidence.

To the eager boys, always on the lookout for new impressions, their exploration of the ship was of the keenest interest. They were constantly coming across something novel. Their previous trip on the *Fearless,* when Bert had been the wireless operator, had of course made them familiar with most things pertaining to a ship. But the *Fearless* had been designed chiefly as a trading craft and the passenger feature had been merely an incident. Here it was the main thing and as each new fad and wrinkle came to their attention it awoke exclamations of wonder and approval.

"It's the real thing in boats," declared Dick, emphatically.

"That's what it is," echoed Tom. "It's brought right up to the minute."

"We're getting a pretty nifty sea education," remarked Bert. "By the time we get through this cruise, we ought to know a lot about the two greatest oceans in the world."

"Yes," replied Dick; "there'll only be the two Arctics and the Indian Ocean left. The Arctics I don't hanker after. There's too much cold for yours truly, and seal meat and whale blubber don't appeal to me as a steady diet. The Indian, on the other hand, is too hot, but after some of

those days on the Pacific when the pitch fairly started out of the deck seams, I guess we could stand it."

"Well, if we never get any more sea life than what we're having, we'll be way above the average," said Bert. "And now let's get down to the wireless room."

And here Bert felt thoroughly at home. All the old days came back to him as he looked around at the wireless apparatus and saw the blue flames spitting from the sounder, as the operator sat at the key, sending and receiving messages from the home land that was so rapidly being left behind. Again he heard the appeal of the Caledonian, on fire from stem to stern, as her despairing call came through the night. Once more he was sending messages of cheer and hope to the battered liner whirling about in the grip of the typhoon. And, most thrilling of all, was the memory of that savage fight with the Chinese pirates when the current from the dynamo had shot its swift death into the yelling hordes just when their triumph seemed assured. What a miracle it all was, anyway—this mysterious force that linked the continents together—that brought hope to the despairing, comfort to the comfortless, life to the dying—this greatest of man's discoveries that seemed almost to border on the supernatural!

The operator then on duty—one of three who worked in shifts of eight hours each, so that never for a moment of day or night was the key deserted—a bright, keen young fellow, but little older than the boys themselves, was pleased at their intelligent interest in his work, and, in the intervals between messages, fell into conversation with them and rapidly became chummy. When he learned that Bert himself was one of the craft, he suggested that he try his hand at sending and receiving a few, while he sat by and rested up. Bert assented with alacrity, and the little smile of good-natured patronage with which he watched him quickly changed to one of amazement, as he saw the swiftness and dexterity with which Bert handled the messages. Especially was he struck by the facility which he displayed at writing down the Marconigrams with his left hand while keeping the right on the key.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed, "you're a dandy. That two-handed stunt is a new one on me. It would make my work twice as fast and twice as easy if I could do it. Where did you get the idea?"

"Old Nature's responsible for that," laughed Bert. "When I was a kid I found it was almost as easy for me to use my left hand as my right, and I fell into the habit."

"It's a mighty good habit all right and don't

you forget it," said the operator, emphatically. "I'm going to try to get it myself. If I do, I may be able to hit the company for a raise in salary," he grinned.

"Here's hoping you get it," replied Bert, and after a little more talk and a cordial invitation to drop in whenever they could, the boys went out in the open.

The breeze freshened as night came on and the waves were running high, but the *Northland* was as "steady as a church." After supper there was a concert in the great saloon and there was no dearth of talent. Some of the fellows were members of mandolin and banjo clubs and had brought their instruments along. Others had fine bass and tenor voices, and glee clubs were improvised. The amateur theatrical contingent was not lacking, and, what with song and sketch and music, the evening passed all too rapidly. The trainers, however, who never let pleasure interfere with business, came now to the fore and packed the boys off to their staterooms to have a good night's rest before real work began on the morrow.

"Well," said Bert, the next morning, as, after a hearty breakfast, he sat on the edge of his berth, getting into his running togs, "here comes one more new experience. There's certainly nothing monotonous about the racing game. I've

run up hill and down, I've run through the woods, I've run on the cinder paths, I've run round the bases, and, when the savages chased us last year, I ran for my life. Now I'm to run on a ship's deck. I'll bet there isn't any kind of running I haven't done. I've even run an automobile."

"Oh, I don't know," said Dick, flippantly, "you haven't run up a board bill."

"No," added Tom, "and you haven't run for office."

A well-aimed pillow that made him duck ended these outrages on the English language, and, as Reddy poked his head in just then to summon his charge, they tumbled up on deck.

CHAPTER VII

The First Marathon

"BY George!" exclaimed Dick, as he looked about him, "I wish we had a moving picture machine on board. This would make a dandy film."

There was certainly motion enough to satisfy the most ardent advocate of the "strenuous life." The deck was humming with life at its fullest. Two hundred young athletes in their picturesque costumes were working away as though their lives depended on it. Here a swimmer splashed in the tank and ran the gamut of all the strokes —the "side," the "sneak," the "crawl," the "trudgeon." From the fencers' quarters came the clash of steel on steel, as they thrust and parried, now retreating, now advancing, seeking to touch with the buttoned point the spot that marked their opponent's heart. The bark of the revolver and the more pronounced crack of the rifle bespoke the effort of the marksmen to round into form. Drake at the stern was striving to outdo his rivals in casting the discus far behind the

ship. On the cork track the hundred-yard men were flashing like meteors from end to end, while the milers and long-distance men circled the ship at ten laps to the mile. The trainers snapped the watches on the trial heats and strove to correct defects of form or pace. Everywhere was speed and energy and abounding life. It was a fine example of the spirit that has made America great—the careful preparation, the unwearied application, the deadly determination that simply refuses to lose when it has once entered upon a struggle. And Bert's heart bounded as he realized that he was one of this splendid band chosen to uphold the honor of the flag. The thought added wings to his feet as he flew again and again around the track, and he might have prolonged the trial far beyond the point of prudence had it not been for the restraining hand of Reddy. That foxy individual never let his sporting blood—and he had splenty—run away with his common sense. He knew when to apply the brake as well as the spur, and on this first day under the novel conditions the brake was the more important. So, long before Bert would have stopped of his own accord and while he was reeling off the miles with no sense of exhaustion, Reddy called a halt.

"Enough is plenty," said he, in answer to Bert's protestations that he had just begun to run. "Even if the ship is steady, we've got to take

account of the motion. You can't do on sea what you can on land. Ye'll get leg-sore if ye keep it up too long." So Bert, although full of running, took his shower and called it a morning's work.

A shorter run in the afternoon rounded out his first day's practice, and after supper the boys sat around on deck, enjoying the cooling breeze. Professor Davis of their own college, who was one of the members of the Olympic Committee, had lighted his cigar and joined the group of Blues. Although a scholar of world-wide reputation, he was by no means of the "dry-as-dust" type. Alive to his finger tips, he was as much a boy as any of them. All ceremony had been put off with his scholastic cap and gown, and now, as he sat with them in easy good fellowship, he was for the moment not their teacher but their comrade.

"Yes," said the Professor, as he looked musingly over the rail, while the *Northland* steadily ploughed her way through the waves; "what Waterloo was to modern Europe, what Gettysburg is to the United States, Marathon was to Greece. Perhaps a more important battle was never fought in the history of the world."

A chance remark about the Marathon race had set the Professor going, and the boys eagerly drew their chairs nearer. They were always

keenly interested in anything that savored of a fight, and the "Prof." had a striking way of telling a story. He had the gift of making his hearers see the thing that he described. As Tom put it, "he didn't give lectures, he drew pictures." It was a picture that he drew now, and, as they listened, they were no longer young Americans of the twentieth century, but Greek youth of twenty-five hundred years earlier. They might have been shepherds or goatherds, tending their flocks on the mountain slopes above the Bay of Marathon, looking open-eyed at the great Persian fleet of six hundred ships, as it slowly sailed into the bay and prepared to disembark the troops.

The immediate object of the expedition was the capture and destruction of Athens, which had defied Darius, King of Persia, and added insult to injury by invading his territory and burning the city of Sardis.

To have his beard plucked in this insolent fashion was something new to the haughty king. He was the autocrat of all Asia. Courtiers fawned upon him; nations cringed before him. He styled himself "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," and no one had the hardihood to dispute the title. He was the Cæsar of the Asiatic world, and Persia occupied the same position as that afterward held by Rome in Europe. It was not to be borne

that this little state of Athens should dare to flout his authority. When he heard of the burning of Sardis, his rage was frightful. He shot an arrow into the air as a symbol of the war he prepared to wage. He commanded that every day a slave waiting at table should remind him: "Sire, remember the Athenians." He sent heralds to all the Greek cities with terrible threats of reprisals, but they were sent back with mockery and ridicule. A mighty armament that he had marshaled was wrecked, but, nothing daunted, he organized another. And it was this vast army that now threatened sack and destruction to the cities of Greece.

It had already captured Eretria, and its surviving citizens were now held in chains, waiting for the Athenians to be joined with them and brought into the presence of King Darius, who was already taxing his ingenuity to devise unheard of tortures for them. And now the galleys had been beached on the shelving shores of the Bay of Marathon, on the edge of which the village stood in a plain that widened in the center, but drew together at the ends like the horns of a crescent. Here they leisurely came on shore, elated at their first victory on Grecian soil and looking confidently for a second.

Upon the outcome of that day hung the future of the world. If Persia won, the last barrier

would have been demolished that shut out Asia from Europe, and there would have been no serious check to prevent the barbarian hordes from swarming over the entire continent. Greek art and culture and civilization would have been blotted out and the entire course of history would have been changed.

It seemed the fight of a pigmy against a giant. The odds in favor of the Persians were tremendous. Hundreds of galleys had been required to carry their forces to the Grecian coast. One hundred thousand men, trained and veteran warriors, accustomed to victory, were drawn up in battle array. Against this mighty host the Greeks had about ten thousand men. They had sent for help to Sparta, but, under the influence of a superstitious custom, the Spartans had refused to march until the moon was at the full. Only a thousand men from Plataea came to the assistance of the outnumbered Athenians.

For several days the armies faced each other, the Persians drawn up on the plain of Marathon and the Greeks encamped on a hillside a mile distant. There were ten commanders of the little force, and opinion was divided as to whether they should attack at once or wait for the help of Sparta. By a narrow margin the bolder policy prevailed, and it was decided to grapple with the enemy then and there.

The Persians were astounded when they saw the devoted little army rushing down the slope and making at double-quick across the plain, chanting their battle song. It seemed like madness or suicide. Half contemptuously, they formed ranks to receive them. The Greeks burst upon them with irresistible fury. The very fierceness and audacity of the attack confused and demoralized their opponents. The center stood its ground, but the wings gave way. Soon the battle became a rout; the rout a massacre. The Persians were beaten back to their galleys with terrible loss and hastily put out to sea. The Greeks lost only a hundred and ninety-two men, and over the bodies of these was erected a huge funeral mound that remains to the present day, as a memorial of that wonderful fight.

The battle had been begun in the late afternoon and dusk had fallen when the slaughter ceased. After the first wild jubilation the thought of the victors turned toward Athens, twenty-six miles away. The city was waiting with bated breath for news of the struggle, watching, praying, fearing, scarcely daring to hope. News must be gotten to them at once. Pheidippides, a noted runner, started off on foot. The roads were rough and hilly, but he ran through the night as one inspired. To all he met he shouted the news and kept on with unabated ardor. Hills rose and

fell behind him. His breath came in gasps. On he went, the fire of patriotic passion burning in his veins. Now from the brow of a hill he saw the lights of Athens.

On, on he ran, but by this time his legs were wavering, his brain was reeling. He had not spared himself and now he was nearly spent. He gathered himself together for one last effort and staggered into the market place where all the city had gathered. They rushed forward to meet him. He gasped out: "Rejoice. We conquer," and fell dead at their feet. His glorious exploit with its tragical ending made him a national hero, and his name was held in reverence as long as the city endured."

The speaker stopped, and for a few minutes no one spoke. The boys had been too deeply stirred. Their thoughts were still with that lonely runner rushing through the night. It was a shock to come from beneath the spell and get back to the present.

"I suppose, Professor," said Tom, at last, "That you've seen the place where the battle was fought?"

"Yes," was the reply, "I was there on the same trip when I visited Olympia."

"What," broke in Bert, "the identical place where the first Olympic games were held nearly three thousand years ago?"

"The identical spot," smiled the professor. "You can still see the walls of the old Stadium where the games were held. Of course the greater part of it is in ruins after so long a time, but you can get a very good idea of the whole thing. It's a beautiful spot and I don't wonder the old Greeks went crazy over it."

"Those fellows were 'fresh-air fiends,' all right," said Tom. "You wouldn't think they had any homes. Everything you read about seems to have happened in the streets or the market place or the gymnasium."

"Yes," returned the professor, "the Greeks were a nation of festivals. They lived out of doors, and their glorious climate made possible all sorts of open-air gatherings and recreations. Their love of beauty, as shown especially in the human form, found expression in the sports and exercises that developed the body to the fullest extent. They did not neglect the soul—Plato and Socrates and hosts of others bear testimony to that—but the body and its development were always uppermost in their thoughts. They honored their thinkers, but they worshipped their athletes. Physical exercises began almost in infancy and continued to extreme old age and the chief honors of the state were reserved for those who excelled in some form of bodily strength. Poets sang about them and statues were raised to them.

"What games did they have?" asked Dick.

"Very much the same as ours," was the answer. "There was a hippodrome for chariot racing, and if you boys remember the description in 'Ben-Hur,' you can imagine how exciting it was. Then there were foot races, at first a single lap around the course, but afterward developing into middle and long-distance running. Besides these were wrestling, leaping, discus-throwing, boxing and hurling the javelin."

"There's one thing I like about them," said Bert. "There weren't bloodthirsty, like the Romans."

"No, we must give them credit for that. There were no better fighters in the world. But the infliction of wanton cruelty, the shedding of blood needlessly, the gloating over human suffering, was wholly repulsive to the Greeks. Perhaps they hated it, not because it was wicked, but because it was ugly. Rome wallowed in wounds and blood. It shouted with delight as gladiators hewed and hacked each other and wild beasts tore women and children to pieces. Its horrible thirst was never slaked and its appetite grew by what it fed upon. The Coliseum with its sickening sights could never have existed in Greece. The Romans developed the brute in man; the Greeks developed the god."

"I suppose they had to train pretty hard for

the games," mused Bert, as he thought of the iron rule of Reddy.

"They certainly did," laughed the professor. "You fellows think you have to work hard, but they worked harder. Why, they had to train steadily for ten months before they entered for any event. Then, too, they had to walk pretty straight. Before the games, a herald challenged all who might know of any wrong thing a competitor had done to stand forth and declare it openly. So that when a man came out winner, he had a certificate of character as well as skill."

"No doubt the fellows that won were looked upon as the real thing," suggested Dick.

"I should say so," said the professor. "The value placed upon a victory was almost incredible. To our cooler Western natures it seems excessive. The fellow citizens of the victor carried him home in triumph. They supported him for the rest of his life. He became the first citizen in the state. The town walls were broken down so that he might enter by a path that had never before been trodden by human foot."

"Well," remarked Dick, "I don't suppose Uncle Sam will go as crazy as all that when Bert comes home with the Marathon prize."

"*If* he comes home with it, you mean," corrected Bert. "'There's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip,' and I may be in for one of the slips."

"Whether you are or not," rejoined the professor, as they rose to retire, "rests 'on the lap of the gods.' But what we do know is that, win or lose, you're going to do your best.

"'"'Tis not in mortals to achieve success,
They may do more—deserve it.'"

CHAPTER VIII

In the Liner's Path

FOR several hours now the air had seemed very close and oppressive, and the experienced captain of the *Northland* felt, through some mysterious sixth sense born of long experience, that a storm was brewing. You may be sure that he gave the matter a good deal more thought than the reckless group of high-spirited boys on board, who would have been satisfied with any kind of weather that came along, provided it gave them a little diversion and excitement. Indeed, it may be that they would even have looked on a shipwreck as something rather pleasant than otherwise, and have regarded it as an ideal chance for adventure.

One reads much in books of the romantic side of shipwreck, but the horrors and privations of such an experience are glossed over. It is safe to say that anyone who has once gone through such a catastrophe will have no desire to repeat it.

Along toward dusk of their second day out, the sky became very overcast, and a gradual drop

in the temperature occurred. Of course, the captain and officers were besieged with questions regarding the cause of this, and they had no difficulty in explaining.

"You see," said Captain Everett, unconsciously assuming the pose of a lecturer, "we are now approaching the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, and getting near the ice regions further north. The comparatively near presence of these icebergs naturally cools the air somewhat, and that accounts for the lower temperature we all feel."

"I've read somewhere," remarked Tom, "that the ice is responsible for the frequent fogs found in this section of the map, but I must confess I could never quite figure out why."

"Oh, that's on account of the ice melting so fast in the warmer air," explained the captain, "it gives off a thick mist, and when the air is so warm that the ice melts fast enough, it forms a very dense fog. I've read a lot about London fogs, and seen 'em, too, but they can't hold a candle to the fogs you run into on the Banks. And from the way things look now, I rather think you're going to have a chance to judge for yourselves."

Indeed, it was as the captain said. In the distance was what looked to be a low-lying island, but they were assured that it was in reality a fog bank, lying close to the water. It drifted nearer

and nearer, and before they knew it had begun to envelop the ship. First they were conscious of a damp, cold feeling in the air, and then gradually nearby objects grew less and less distinct.

"Say, fellows," laughed Dick, "I think we'd better get some rope and tie ourselves together before it's too late. We're not going to be able to see each other very long, if this keeps up."

"Righto!" responded Bert. "Why, I can hardly see my own hand now, and for all I know my feet may have walked off on their own hook and got lost in this infernal mist. I can't see them, at any rate."

"Gee, I hope they haven't, old top," said Tom. "I'm afraid it might be rather an inconvenience to you to lose them just now. It will be quite a handicap when you try to run a few days from now, don't you think?"

"Oh, I don't know. I think I could run about as fast on my hands as you could on your feet," retorted Bert, and turned the laugh against Tom.

But by now it was really impossible to see objects more than five feet away, and the boys had to grope their way about with outstretched hands, like so many blind persons. After a while somebody started a game of "blind-man's tag," as they christened it. The one who was "it" had to locate the others by sound, and when he thought he had done so would make a wild rush

in the general direction of the noise. Then there would be a wild scramble to get out of his way, and more than one laughing athlete was sent sprawling in a head-on collision. They kept this up till they were tired, and then dropped down on the deck to rest and listen to the yarns of the sailors. Naturally these tales were all about troubles at sea due to fogs, and many a weird story was told that stamped the teller as an inventive genius. Each one tried to crowd more exciting events into his tale than the last narrator, and the result was lurid.

Of course, in most of the stories some part was based on an actual occurrence, but to sift out the truth was like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack. However, these old tars were past masters at the art, and there is no doubt that they made their stories interesting. The boys listened with great interest, now and then putting in a question when it seemed needed.

Mermaids and sea serpents abound in many of these yarns, and, as Bert afterward remarked, "seemed commoner than squirrels in a park." But they passed the time away very pleasantly, and before the boys realized it, Reddy was among them, commanding, "Off with ye now, and get a good night's rest. Ye should have all been in bed a good half-hour ago."

Of course there was no resisting this mandate,

even had they been so inclined, so off to bed they went, groping and stumbling through the fog, that by this time had grown dense almost beyond belief.

"Good-night!" exclaimed Tom, as he tripped over a coil of rope and then slipped on the slippery deck. "I only hope this old tub doesn't go ramming any icebergs the way the old *Titanic* did a little while ago. Mermaids may be all right in stories, but I don't care to make their acquaintance under water just yet a while."

"No, I think I can pike along a little while longer without a closer acquaintance," laughed Bert, "and also without seeing any hundred-foot sea serpents in their native element. Why, according to the stories we've just been swallowing, one of those fellows could twine himself around the Woolworth Building and wave his head over the roof without half trying."

"Without a doubt," said Dick, "and I imagine it would be rather embarrassing to look up and find one gazing at you through the skylight."

"I wouldn't be a bit surprised," said Bert. "However, I guess we won't lie awake very long to-night worrying about it."

"Righto!" acquiesced Dick, and with a few more remarks along the same line they descended the steep cabin companionway. It was a relief to get out of the dense, clammy fog, and you may

be sure the dry, comfortable berths felt very grateful to the tired athletes. In less time than it takes to tell, they had all dropped off into deep slumber.

It seemed but a few moments later when Dick found himself sitting bolt upright in his berth, with a vague but none the less terrifying sensation that something terrible had happened. At first he thought he must have been dreaming, but a moment later shouts and cries on deck dispelled this idea. Dick hastily awakened Bert and Tom and all three bounded up on deck, where they found everything in confusion.

As they emerged from the companionway hatch they saw that the fog still held, thicker, if that were possible, than when they had gone below. The captain was shouting orders from the bridge, and members of the crew were scurrying wildly here and there across the slippery decks.

The ship's engines had been stopped, as they could tell by the absence of vibration, but it was several minutes before they could get hold of anybody to tell them what was amiss. Finally, however, they managed to stop one of the crew long enough to be told that they had rammed what appeared to be a fishing schooner, and that the latter was sinking fast. Then the sailor hurried off on his interrupted errand, and the three

boys dashed forward to the bows, where most of the excitement seemed to be.

As they drew nearer the forward part of the vessel they were able to see grotesque figures, distorted by the fog, hurrying to and fro. Soon, as their eyes became accustomed more and more to the dim light of lanterns, they could make out the outline of the mast and rigging of a sailing vessel close against the side of their own ship.

Up this rigging men were climbing swiftly, and jumping on to the deck of the *Northland.* Already there was a group of eight strange sailors standing there, with more coming all the time. Even as the boys watched, however, the mast of the sailing vessel gave a great lurch, and a cry went up from everybody watching.

"For the Lord's sake, hurry!" went up a shout from those on the stricken vessel. "She's sinking beneath our feet. Jump lively there!"

By the light of the binnacle lamp on the sinking vessel could be seen the sturdy figure of her captain, standing immovable and calm and giving orders as coolly as though he were not in the slightest danger. According to the unwritten law of the sea, a captain may not leave his ship until all his crew are off, and it was plain that this man would be staunch to the end.

It became evident that the doomed vessel was sinking fast, and there were still several men on

her deck waiting their turn to climb the rigging to safety. Could they possibly get up before the ship foundered?—that was the question.

The mast sank lower and lower, until the last sailor up had to be grasped by friendly outstretched arms and dragged over the rail. There was now no reason for the captain to stay on deck, and seeing this, he made a dash for the mast. But he was a second too late. The waves for several minutes had been lapping at the decks of the doomed craft, which lay at a sharp angle to the water, and now with a sickening lurch it dived under the waves, taking its devoted captain with it.

"Lower a boat, there! Lower a boat," vociferated the captain of the *Northland*, and the crew hastened to obey. In an incredibly short time two boats had been manned and lowered, and began cruising about over the spot where the vessel had sunk. In that dense fog, however, there seemed little hope of ever again seeing the heroic captain, and they were just on the point of giving up the search and returning to their ship when suddenly they heard what seemed to be a faint shout for help out of the fog about fifty yards from them. They rowed toward the sound, after shouting back encouragingly, and it was not long before they made out the figure of a man struggling stoutly in the icy water.

In less time than it takes to tell they had fished him out, and started rowing back to the steamer. Soon they were on board, and were accorded a royal reception by the assembled passengers and crew, all of whom were by this time on deck.

The man whom they had picked up proved to be the captain of the foundered vessel, and everybody crowded forward to shake his hand and congratulate him on his escape.

But now Captain Everett pressed through the crowd, and after greeting the unfortunate skipper and expressing his deep regret over the accident, hustled him off to his cabin. Here he was wrapped in blankets, and served with boiling hot coffee.

After he had recovered his strength somewhat, he proceeded to give his account of the accident.

"We had a lucky day yesterday," he said, "and were anchored over the same spot, intending to start in again early the next morning. Most of the crew was asleep, and on account of this cursed fog our lookout was unable to see your vessel until it was too late to give warning. But fortunately, every body was saved, and as the ship was fully insured, matters might have been much worse, I suppose."

"Yes," said Captain Everett, "we were steaming only at quarter speed, or we would not have been able to get about in time to render you as-

sistance. I am very thankful that no lives were lost, which is rare good fortune in an accident of this kind."

"It is, for a fact," responded the other, and sank into silence. He appeared to be troubled in mind, and little wonder. Even though he were not actually to blame for the disaster, as of course he was not, still he knew that his employers would hold him responsible. And there is probably no other profession in the world where a clear record is more highly prized than in seafaring.

However, under the cheerful influence of the cabin table his depression seemed to lighten somewhat, and he joined in the general conversation. He proved to be a man of some education and widely varied experience, and he recounted many tales of peril by sea.

It was late before the party broke up, and the unfortunate mariner was shown to his cabin. He and the members of his rescued crew stayed on the *Northland* several days, but then a homeward bound vessel was hailed and they were placed on board. There were hearty leave-takings on both sides, with mutual expressions of regret.

As the ships rapidly drew apart, the captain and crew of the sunken sailing vessel lined the rail, and waved to the athletes until their figures became indistinguishable.

"Well," remarked Bert, as they turned away. "That was an occurrence that we won't forget in quite some time, I guess."

"Bet your life it was," agreed Tom. "It isn't every voyage that we get the chance to do the rescue stunt like that."

"Which is a very fortunate thing," remarked Dick. "It's all right for us, and gives us a lot of excitement, but it's not much fun for the poor fellows that get wrecked. Here's their vessel, which they probably thought a lot of, as all sailors do, gone, and their employment with it, for the time at least. And that's saying nothing of the close approach to death which they had. I think I'd rather pursue some other occupation than that of the sea. You have too many chances of making a personal visit to the well known Mr. Davy Jones."

"Righto," agreed Tom, with a twinkle in his eye. "I'd rather do something safe, like running a sixty-horsepower automobile at the rate of eighty miles an hour, or some other little amusement like that, wouldn't you, Bert?"

"Oh, of course," grinned Bert, "there's no doubt that that's the safest thing in the world to do. You never hear of anyone getting hurt doing that, do you?"

"Certainly not," said Tom. "Why, I've even heard that doctors recommend it to patients

suffering from nervous disorders, and requiring a little mild diversion. In fact, it's the customary thing to do."

"No doubt about it," said Bert, and then they all joined in a hearty laugh.

After this they dispersed to their various training "stunts," which must be gone through, wrecks or no wrecks.

CHAPTER IX

Man Overboard!

DUSK had succeeded the glorious sun-set and touched it with the sombre hue of twilight. The day had been exceptionally hot, a day when one seems to find just sufficient energy to lounge in an easy chair under the pretense of reading a novel until a delightful drowsiness creeps over you and all pretense is at an end—you are sleeping the sleep of the just on a scorching summer day.

But now night had descended on the stately *Northland,* and with it had come a cool, refreshing breeze. All was quiet, serene, peaceful, and among the passengers, lounging in groups about the deck, conversation was carried on in undertones.

"Gee," Tom was saying, softly. "This has been one great day, hasn't it? Nothing to do but hang around on deck, alternately reading, sleeping and watching the wheels go 'round."

"Yes, I guess this is about the first day since we have been on board that something exciting

hasn't happened and it seems mighty good for a change."

"Look out," Bert warned. "The day isn't over yet and there is plenty of time for something exciting to happen between this and midnight. For my part, I wouldn't much mind if it did, for after a day like this you feel as if you needed something to wake you up."

"Do you?" Tom queried, sarcastically. "I feel just now as if I had more urgent need of something to put me to sleep," and with a yawn he dropped into a convenient chair and settled himself comfortably with his feet against the rail. "Sing us that song you used to sing at college before we threatened to set the Black Hand on your trail, Dick," he invited. "Perhaps that will help to woo sweet slumber."

"It would be much more likely to woo sweet nightmare," said Bert, which was true if not complimentary.

"That's all right," Dick retorted, good-naturedly. "Of course, I understand that this apparent reluctance on your part is due entirely to sour grapes since you doubtless are aware of the fact that I never would condescend——"

"Oh can it," Tom murmured, sleepily. "If you won't sing, the least you can do is to keep still and let a fellow go to sleep."

"Oh, certainly," Dick said, obligingly, "any-

thing you wish. As I was saying," he went on with a wink at Bert, "you are doubtless aware that I would never condescend to render that immortal ballad before so——"

"You have gone too far," Tom cried in a terrible voice, as he sprang for Dick. "You have dared disobey my mandates and now you shall suffer the penalty——"

But the mock tragedy was never enacted, for, even as Tom spoke, his attention was caught by the figure of a man covered from head to foot with soot and grime and running toward their end of the deck at full speed. At his heels was a crowd led by the steward who cried out frantically to the boys, "Stop him, stop him! He's gone mad!"

So suddenly had come the thunder-bolt from a clear sky that for a few seconds the boys could do nothing but stare at the spectacle before them and wonder if they could be awake. In fact, Bert confessed later that he had had a faint impression that Dick's nightmare must have come upon them ahead of time.

Bert was the first to take in the situation and with a cry of, "I guess it's up to us, fellows," he ran toward the wild figure now only a few feet in front of them. But even as the three comrades threw out their hands to halt the flying madman, he paused, glared around him for an instant with

the look of a hunted animal brought to bay, and then, with a fierce, inhuman cry that echoed in Bert's memory for many a long day after, he threw himself over the rail and into the glassy depths nearly forty feet below!

For a brief moment there was the silence of death on board the *Northland,* and then arose such an uproar that even the captain's great voice, shouting orders to the crew, could scarcely be heard above the din.

"'Tis nought but a stoker gone crazy with the heat of the day," Bert heard a man say.

"Ay," growled a stoker who had also overheard. "'Tis a wonder that we are all not crazy or dead this day, but that poor devil is worse off than us for he can't swim a stroke."

"Did you say that that man can't swim?" Bert demanded, while a look of horror crept over his face.

"That I did, young feller," the stoker answered, as he eyed Bert insolently from head to foot, "though doubtless he can find something to hang on to until——"

But Bert never heard the end of the sentence for he was busy untying his shoes and stripping off his coat.

"Bert, Bert, you are never going to risk your life needlessly for that madman," Tom pleaded. "The boat is stopping, now, and it will pick him

up in a few minutes. Anyway he's crazy——"

But Bert stopped him. "He's a man," he said simply, "and he can't swim." Then there was a flash of white in the air, a quick splash and Bert was on his way to save a life.

Down there in the eddy and swirl of the waves, Bert had but one thought, one hope—to reach that little speck that he had sighted from the deck of the steamer. Nor did it once occur to him that he could have acted otherwise. One of his fellow beings had need of his splendid strength and skill, and not until they failed him would he give up the fight.

So on and on he swam, taxing his great vitality and endurance to the utmost. But to his tortured fancy it seemed as though he were being dragged backward. Surely he could not be making any progress at all at this speed. Then a fierce feeling of anger swept over him, burning him like a flame—anger at this feeling of impotence that threatened to master him.

"One would think," he raged, "that I had never been outside a country town in my life. I am making progress. I can save that fellow's life, and what's more, I'm going to."

Ah, that was better! Now every long, powerful stroke did its work and soon he was within a few feet of the spot where the madman was holding on to a slippery piece of driftwood, that now

and again slipped from his numbed fingers, only to be regained by a desperate effort.

As Bert neared him, the stoker cried out frantically, "Don't come near me! Don't touch me! I'll kill you if you do!"

But as he spoke his fingers lost their grip and he would have sunk below the surface if it had not been for Bert's cat-like quickness. In a flash, he had grasped the stoker around the waist and lifted his head above the water, but he was not quite prepared for what was to follow.

For a second the stoker lay passive in Bert's grasp, gasping for breath. Then with the quick, sinuous motion of a reptile he twisted about and met his fingers around Bert's throat in the vise-like grip that only a maniac can effect and began slowly to tighten his hold.

In desperation Bert tore at the relentless fingers, fighting with all the fierceness of a wild animal for his life. But the more he struggled the tighter grew that band of iron about his neck. They were under water now, but not even threatened suffocation could make the madman loose his grip. Tighter and tighter it grew, until Bert felt the blood go pounding up into his brain and his eyes seemed starting from his head.

Was this to be the end, then, of all his hopes, of all his dreams, of all his aspirations? His college, his friends, his two dear comrades, was

he to lose all these now, when his future was filled with such bright promise? And that by the hands of a man he had risked his life to save!

Then once again came that rush of wild, hot anger, this time a thousandfold more fierce than before, and again it seemed to give him exhaustless strength. He drew his arm back slowly, and then with all the strength of his body behind it planted his fist squarely in the madman's forehead.

Then, at last, that iron grip loosened and the fingers relaxed their hold. With great joy and exultation in his heart, Bert grasped the arm as it slipped past him and dragged him to the surface.

With a feeling of exquisite comfort and ease, he floated on his back, drawing in great breaths of the glorious air into his tortured lungs. Softly as in a dream he heard the faint dip of oars in the water and then came Dick's voice calling his name.

"Stay where you are, Bert," it was saying. "We'll be with you in a jiffy, now."

"You mean we will if this hanged boat ever stops going backward and makes up its mind to travel in the right direction," Tom said impatiently. "We've been five minutes getting nowhere, already."

"Stop your growling, Tom," Dick com-

manded. "You ought to be so all-fired thankful to see Bert floating on the surface instead of being entertained in Davy Jones' locker that you wouldn't have time for anything but thanksgiving."

"You don't suppose that I'm not thankful, do you," Tom demanded, huskily. "If he hadn't come up again after we saw him go under I—well—I—Bert," he called, lustily, to hide the break in his voice, "can you hear us now?"

"Sure thing," came a weak voice that they nevertheless recognized as Bert's.

Then the rowers redoubled their efforts and in a few strokes had reached the spot where Bert floated with his still-unconscious burden. In less time than it takes to tell, willing hands had lifted the stoker into the boat and Bert was half dragged, half pushed in after him. For the fierce, superhuman strength that had come to him in his extremity had passed as quickly as it had come, leaving him as weak as a rag. It had been through sheer grit and will power that he had been able to hold on to the stoker until the boat could relieve him.

As he was hauled into the boat, Dick and Tom fell upon him, half laughing, half crying and wholly joyful. They showered him with praises and called him every endearing name they could think of, such as—"dear old fellow, game old

scout," and a hundred others equally incoherent but eminently satisfactory.

After five minutes of hard pulling, the little boat reached the steamer's side. Her rails were crowded with passengers, waiting to welcome in the first real drama that many of them had ever witnessed.

As Bert was helped on deck he was welcomed with a rousing cheer that might have been heard for a mile around the ship. Bert flushed with pleasure and acknowledged the salute as best he could in his drippnig garments, while he whispered to his two companions:

"Get me into the cabin as soon as you can, will you, fellows? It's fine of them to greet me so right royally, but I know I must look a wreck and it wouldn't feel so very bad to get some dry clothes on."

Meanwhile, the stoker, who had not regained consciousness, was taken below to receive medical attention. As the sailors laid him on his bunk they muttered discontentedly of the inadvisability of rescuing mad stokers, who were little better than land lubbers, anyway.

"Sure and now we'll be having one more worthless shpalpeen on our hands," O'Brien was saying. "Oi'm not sayin' as it wasn't a brave thing that that young feller has been afther doin', but jist the same it would 'a been bether to have

left him there and saved us the throuble of burying of him later."

"Ay, ay, so say I," growled another. "He'll probably die before the week's out, and 'tis my opinion that he's better dead than alive, seein' he's crazy, poor devil."

"Hush! he's conscious," warned the doctor, as he rose from his kneeling position beside the bunk. "He will do nicely, now, with good care. I'll be back in an hour to see how he's getting along."

As the doctor left the room, the two sailors neared the stoker, who lay with his eyes closed, as if absolutely oblivious to their presence.

"Well, old b'y," said O'Brien, "how be ye feelin' afther your duckin'? Pretty spry?"

Slowly the man opened his eyes and let them rest for a long minute on the big Irishman's ruddy face. When he spoke, the words came haltingly, as if he were groping in his memory for facts that persistently eluded him.

"I don't seem to recollect," he said, "just exactly what happened. Was I—did I"—and the fear and pleading in his voice went straight to O'Brien's heart—"was I—mad?"

"Now don't you worry about that, son," O'Brien lied, kindly. "Ye wuzn't mad, ye wuz jist a thrifle touched be the heat. Oi'll bet anythin' ye'll be up 'n aroun' as hale an' hearty as

the skipper himself in a day or two." Then he added in an undertone to his companion, "Bedad, an' if he ain't as sane as any man jack of us, me name ain't Pat O'Brien. Sure an' Oi ain't niver seen the loike of it before."

"Me neither," the other answered in awe-struck tones. "He goes off the boat madder than a March hare and comes back after a dip in the briny and a knock-out punch over one eye seemin' as right as a trivet. It beats all."

Meanwhile the man on the bed had been watching the men wistfully, and as O'Brien turned to him again, he asked eagerly, "Please tell me everything. I know I was out of my head, so you needn't be afraid to tell me the truth."

"Sure and Oi will, then," Pat said, heartily, and he did, from beginning to end, omitting nothing.

When the tale was finished the doctor came again to have another look at his patient and was surprised and delighted at his improvement. "Why, at this rate we'll have you up and around by this time day after to-morow," he cried. "What's that?" as the stoker whispered something in his ear. "Why, yes, I guess he will come. I'll give him your message, anyway, and see what he says."

Then with a cheerful nod he left his patient

to the enjoyment of a well-cooked, appetizing meal.

Half an hour later Bert, clad once more in dry, snug clothes, made his way hurriedly below to the stokers' cabin. He had declined his friends' offer to accompany him, for his instinct told him that the stoker would prefer to see him alone.

As he turned the knob of the door the stoker looked around inquiringly. Bert went forward quickly.

"I am Bert Wilson," he said. "The doctor gave me your message and I came as soon as I could get a bite to eat."

"It was very good of you to come, sir," the man replied, nervously fumbling with a glass on the table at his elbow. "You see, I wanted to thank you and tell you how sorry I am that I gave you—any—trouble in the water." His voice was scarcely above a whisper. "I can jist recollect, now, that I tried to—kill—you. Can you ever—forgive——"

"Forgive," Bert interrupted. "Why I have nothing to forgive, but if I had I would have forgiven and forgotten long ago." Then he put out his hand impulsively and said in that frank, open way that was peculiarly his own, "You and I have gone through great danger together and have managed to pull through with nothing but

a few scratches to tell the story. Shall we shake hands on it?"

"Well, you sure did get everything that was coming to you, Bert," Tom said, as they were getting ready for bed that night. "You asked for excitement——"

"And I got it," Bert finished, as he slipped in between the cool, inviting sheets. "Good-night, fellows, I'm off."

CHAPTER X

Crooked Work

"YES, me byes, there's nothin' in this wide world much worse, to me manner o' thinkin', than a 'ringer.'" It was Reddy who spoke, following up a conversation in which most of the athletes had joined. "Crookedness is a bad thing in any line of business or amusement, but it's specially bad in anythin' like sport, that in its very nature ought to be kept clean and wholesome. It's a queer thing, though, but true none the less, that there's nothin' much worse than some branches o' sport. Look at prize fightin', fer instance. O' course, I'm not sayin' that some fights aren't on the level, an' all that, but take them as a rule and the scraps and scrappers are so crooked they could hide behind a corkscrew."

"Yes, and there are lots of other things the same way," observed Bert, who was one of the group. "I've been told that wrestling is as crooked, if not more so, than boxing. Do you think it is, Reddy?"

"Well, that's a hard question, m' son," re-

turned the veteran trainer, thoughtfully. "When you get right down to it, there's not much to choose between them. I've seen many a boxin' an' wrestlin' bout in my time, but there's very few that I thought was straight from start to finish. It's a wonder to me how the fight promoters manage to keep on fooling the public. It looks to me as though a babe in arms would get wise to their game. But nix! The poor ginks will file out of a hall after a rotten go, swearing they'll never spend a cent to see another fight, and the next week they're back again, same as ever."

"I guess there's not as much underhand work in other lines of sport as in that, though, is there, Reddy?" questioned Tom.

"No, I don't think there is," answered Reddy, speculatively. "Of course, among amateurs, there generally isn't the money incentive that the professionals have, and that makes a big difference. The hard thing, when you're dealing with amateur meets, is to keep professionals out. Some club will want specially to win a race, and like as not they'll look around for some professional, who's not too well known, to help them out. It's a dirty, low-down trick, o' course, but it's tried many a time, just the same."

"Huh," said Tom, "why doesn't the amateur up and beat the professional at his own game?

There's nothing very wonderful about a man, just because he runs for money, instead of the honor."

"Thrue fer you, me bye," returned Reddy, smiling, "but that's sometimes easier said than done. A man who's running to earn his bread is usually going to run faster than the man who's simply out fer glory. That may not sound very noble, and all that, but it's the truth, nine times out o' ten."

"Yes, but how about the tenth time?" asked Bert, who had been listening attentively to all the trainer said.

"Well, once in a great while the 'ringer' gets tripped up, o' course. I remember one time, many a long year ago, when I saw jist the thing you mentioned happen," and a reminiscent smile spread over the veteran's face.

The listening group of young athletes sensed a story at once, and assailed Reddy with requests to "fire away, and tell them about it."

The trainer seemed in a talkative mood, and without much urging, began.

"'Twas whin I was but a young lad," he said, "but even thin I was always interested in sport of any kind, and used to attend ivery track event for miles around the little town where I lived. I used to help around the club houses, carryin' water and such things, and got to know, by sight

at any rate, a good many well-known runners and sich.

"Well, one day there was a big college meet not far from our town, and o' course nothin' would do me but what I must see it.

"Accordin'ly, I was hangin' around the club house long before the time for the race, and had plenty o' time to size up the contestants. They were as fine lookin' a set o' byes as you could wish to see, and they was all jokin' and rough-housin' as though they had never a care on their minds. I knew they'd be in dead enough earnest in a little while, though.

"Well, the time come for them to get dressed in their runnin' togs, and suddenly I began to sit up an' take notice, as you might say. As one big, sthrappin' feller, that I hadn't noticed much before, on account o' his havin' kept apart a little from the others, and havin' been so quiet-like, stood up in his runnin' suit, it flashed across me mind that I'd seen him run some place before. At first I couldn't place him, think as hard as I might, but suddenly I remembered where I'd seen him. It was at a race held about a year ago, and then he had run in the hundred-yard dash with professionals and had come in third.

"'Well, what do ye know about that,' thinks I to myself, 'the good fer nothin' crook is goin' to run against these young fellers, and it's a

cinch he'll cop off the prize.' And, believe me, I felt sorry for the other boys that was goin' to race against him, fer I knew he was fast, although not among the first-raters, and I figured that none o' the others would have a show in his company.

"However, there was nothin' I could do, for nobody would have taken my word for it, an' I'd a' got laughed at fer my trouble. So I kept me own council, and sat tight, but all interest in the big race was lost fer me, for I hated crooked work about as much then as I do now, I guess.

"There was a young feller from C—— that I'd picked to win the hundred-yard dash, before I recognized this ringer chap. (His name was Smith, by the way, but he was known now, I found out, as Castle.) Young Sidney was a game kid, all right, from his toes up. He wasn't very tall, and at first glance you wouldn't think he'd be any great shakes as a runner. But he could get away at the crack o' the pistol about as fast as any man I ever saw, barrin' none, and he could certainly burn up the track fer a short distance. He was never much on the long distances, but he was sure class on everythin' up to three hundred yards.

"I'd seen him run several times, and once or twice when I'd brought him a drink o' water, or somethin' like that, he'd grin at me an' give me

a pleasant word or two. So I had a likin' for him, and was minded to put him wise.

"So the first chance I got I sidled up to him and tipped him off that this Castle feller was a 'profesh.' He gives a long whistle, and looks pretty much surprised, naturally. But he was game, clear through, and he says to me, 'Well, kid, I don't care if he is a professional. I'm as good a man as he is, and I think I can beat him, anyway. It's the only chance I have, because I'm not going to squeal to the officials.'

"Well, I liked him all the more for that, and o' course wished him all kinds o' luck. Me heart was heavy fer him, though, for I didn't think he would get a look-in.

"By now the time had come fer the lads to line up, and they all filed out o' the club house, as sober as so many deacons. The starter got them in position, and everythin' was ready fer the event. There were five starters, and each one looked to have a chance to the finish.

"'Get on your mark! Get set!' yelled the starter, and pointed his little pistol up in the air. Crack! she went, and the lads were off in a bunch, runnin' as though the old Nick were after thim.

"This 'ringer' chap was up to all the tricks of the trade, howiver, and had 'beat this pistol' by the shade of an eyelash. He had a five-foot lead on young Sidney before they'd gone eight

yards, and that's an awful lot in a hundred-yard sprint. 'Good-night,' thinks I to meself, 'the ringer's won the race already,' and the thought made me far from happy, as ye may aisily imagine.

"But the old boy himself seemed to be in young Sidney, and before I knew it my heart was in me mouth and I was almost yelling me lungs out rootin' for him.

"He raced along in great bounds, and it seemed to me as though each stride covered ten feet. By the time they'd made half the distance he was right up to the 'ringer's' shoulder, and seemed to be goin' faster each second.

"Smith (or Castle, whichever you choose to call him) gave a glance back, and let out every bit o' speed in him. For a second he drew away from the kid, and I was almost ready to cry, I was so disappointed.

"But Sidney was not the bye to be left behind, and he put on full steam, so to speak. By now everybody that was watchin' the race was standin' on their ears with excitement, and when at the seventy-five-yard mark Sidney drew right abreast of this Smith chap I thought the whole field would go wild. Pretty women an' girls waved their parasols and shrieked at the top o' their lungs, and as fer the men—well, they just went plumb batty.

"The other entries were practically out of the race now, and were plugging along far in the rear. The two leaders hit it up faster an' faster, till they were fairly flying. For all he was a 'ringer,' the Smith chap was game, and did his best, I'll say that for him. But young Sidney was a regular cyclone that day, and on the last ten yards jumped ahead as though the other fellow were standing still. It seemed to me he cleared the last fifteen feet in one jump, and I'll swear he was in the air when his breast broke the ribbon.

"He'd won the race, all right, but he didn't hear the applause that pretty nearly split the sky in two. He just crumpled up like a wet rag, and it was pretty near ten minutes before we could bring him to.

"When he did finally open his eyes, he happened to look at me first, and he grinned weakly, 'Well, Red, we trimmed the "ringer" good and plenty, you and I, didn't we?' and he actually shook hands with me.

"Believe me, boys, I was the happiest kid in the State that day, bar none."

Here Reddy stopped speaking, and gazed ruminatively out over the ocean, with what looked like a mist in his blue eyes.

After the athletes had discussed this story in all its details, Bert asked, "But what became of

the 'ringer,' Reddy? What did they do to him?"

"Oh, there was nothing much we could do," replied the trainer, "but, believe me, it was an awful knock to the college that put him up to it, and I don't think they tried that trick for many a long day afterward. Believe me, lads, crookedness doesn't pay, in sport or in anything else."

CHAPTER XI

A Monster Peril

THE good ship *Northland* had been traveling at reduced speed several hours, and Bert, who was always intensely interested in the operation of the vessel, was quick to notice this. At supper time the speed had not increased, and accordingly Bert took the first opportunity that presented itself to ask the captain respectfully the reason for this.

"Why, it's this way," he was told, "we've been receiving wireless messages recently that there is considerable ice in these waters, and we're going slowly in consequence. Of course, at this time of the year, we oughtn't to have to bother about icebergs at all, but the last winter was very long and cold, and this is the result."

"Oh, I see," said Bert; "but how do you know when you're in the neighborhood of an iceberg? I should imagine it would be a rather hard object to make out."

"No, you're wrong there," responded the captain. "They are very easy to see, as they emit a

pale sort of glimmer that makes them very prominent at night. Of course, you never have any difficulty locating them in the daytime, fortunately. And then there's another thing: they always chill the air for a considerable distance around them, and any sailor can tell what is threatening his ship when he feels this. Oh, no, they are easy enough to avoid, as a rule. Of course, sometimes a vessel running at high speed will not get warning of the presence of the menace until it is too late, as in a fog, for instance. In that case there is generally a report of another wreck in the morning papers a few days afterward."

"But I should think there would be a way of detecting them by means of some instrument, say, for example, with an ordinary thermometer" said Bert.

"Well, devices of that kind have been invented and used," replied Captain Everett, "but in these days of high speed the warning generally comes too late, unless the ship is steaming at a very slow pace.

"Well, then, science has been able to find nothing that is much better than the old method of a watch up in the crow's nest. Is that the idea?" questioned Bert, in a disappointed tone. He had great faith in the ability of mechanical science to solve every problem under the sun,

and accordingly he was incredulous on this point.

"So far that is true," said the captain; "but a device has recently been patented that seems to fill the bill perfectly, as far as I can see."

"How does that work?" queried Bert.

"Well, to explain it, you would have to have a rather exhaustive knowledge of icebergs and their habits," said the captain, smiling; "however, I will do my best to make it clear to you. You see, an iceberg, being so much colder than the surrounding water, sets up a series of currents in the ocean, that are felt for a considerable distance. The warmer water flows toward the 'berg, and the colder water away, just as in the air the warmer air will rise and the colder air rush in to take its place. Is that plain?"

"Oh, certainly, I can understand how that works, all right," replied Bert.

"Well, in that case, you can see how simple the rest is," said the captain. "All you have to do is construct an instrument that will be affected by these currents, and your problem is solved. Of course that is a comparatively simple matter, and the writer of the article I read claimed to have done it. His theory seemed very plausible to me, and I would be very little surprised to see every ship equipped with his device in the near future."

"It certainly seems feasible," agreed Bert,

"in fact, it seems so simple that it's queer someone has not thought of it before."

"Oh, there's nothing surprising in that, to my way of thinking," said Captain Everett. "Many of our greatest inventions, or rather their principles, existed long before they were put to practical use. Take steam, for example. Steam has existed from the beginning of the world, with all its power and possibilities, yet it is not until a comparatively recent date that it has been harnessed and put to work. It's the same way with electricity, or any of a thousand things you could think of."

"Yes, there's no doubt but what you're right," admitted Bert, "but just the same, it seems too bad they couldn't have been discovered sooner. Look at the *Titanic* disaster, for instance. If they had had that device that you were just telling me about installed, the whole tragedy could probably have been avoided, and the world been spared a horrible disaster.

"It certainly does seem a pity," agreed the captain, "but then, if everything had been discovered right off, there would have been nothing left for you or me to invent, and the world would have no work left for anyone to do. There seems to be a great plan back of these things, after all."

"It's too bad we haven't something of the

kind on board now," said Bert. "It might come in handy."

"I wouldn't be a bit surprised," said Captain Everett, with a worried air. "I hate to lose valuable time crawling along at this pace, but of course anything is better than what might happen if we didn't. I don't want to cheat old Uncle Sam out of a victory by drowning all his athletes," and here he smiled.

"Oh, it would be a terrible loss," agreed Bert, slyly, "specially that of yours truly. That would indeed be an irreparable calamity."

"Oh, of course, of course," laughed the captain. "That goes without saying, Wilson."

At this point Reddy strolled up, and joined in the conversation. His thoughts, however, dwelt more with perfecting a certain crowd of athletes for the coming Olympic games than with inventions to warn ships of their peril, or any other kind.

After a time the captain asked Reddy how his charges were coming along.

"Oh, as well as could be expected, I suppose," growled the trainer. Secretly he was more than satisfied with their condition, but would have died rather than admit it. "They seem more inclined to exercise their jaw muscles than anything else, but otherwise they're not so awful bad."

"That's rather negative praise," laughed Bert, "but we know very well that if we weren't all right Reddy would be exercising his 'jaw muscles' more than he does, so we have to be satisfied with that."

Reddy grinned, but made no reply, and shortly afterward sauntered off. After a little further conversation with the captain, Bert followed suit, and strolled up into the bows, where a man was on lookout.

The sailor was gazing intently ahead, and did not look up at the sound of Bert's approach, or even when he spoke to him. He knew that the safety of the whole ship and those on board rested on him, and he was taking no chances.

He answered Bert's salutation civilly enough, however, but answered his questions only in monosyllables, and Bert soon gave him up as a bad job. He realized, moreover, that the man was right, as it was against the ship's rules to talk while on duty.

So Bert leaned against the bulwarks in silence, having little else to do at the time, and gazed ahead in an abstracted fashion. No sound was to be heard save the wash of the water against the bows, and occasionally a shout or laugh from the athletes amidships.

Suddenly Bert was roused from his reverie by a call from the lookout.

"Ice ahead! Ice ahead!" yelled the sailor, and dashed madly toward the stern, waving his arms wildly.

Bert gazed intently ahead, and could faintly make out a luminous mass some distance from the ship, but directly in its path. He was conscious of a feeling of damp chill in the air, too, and felt that they were nearing an iceberg. Suddenly the vibration of the engines ceased, and then started again, and Bert knew they had been reversed. The ship seemed to lose little of its speed at first, though, and the huge 'berg loomed up closer and closer. The helm had been put over, and the ship swung around obediently, and so approached the 'berg at an angle. Shouts and cries arose from the crew and some of the passengers, and it was an exciting moment.

Gradually the ship lost its momentum under the reverse pull of the big propellers, but to Bert it seemed impossible that they could stop in time. Nearer and nearer they came, and the ship seemed wrapped in an icy fog. Now Bert could make out details of the 'berg, and even in such a time as this, when it seemed that he was approaching certain death, he noted idly the huge spires and needles of ice that rose into the blue sky like church steeples.

Now the good ship was almost touching the 'berg, but was at a long angle with it. Bert saw

that the impact would not be as great as he had at first imagined, but nevertheless he awaited it with bated breath.

Then it came—a jarring, grinding, glancing blow, and the ship trembled from bow to stern. Huge fragments of ice clattered down on her decks, and some of her crew were badly hurt by flying ice splinters.

There was great confusion then, and a few of the crew started a rush for the boats, but were met before they could get there by Captain Everett and his first and second officers, all with revolvers in their hands.

"Back there! Back!" shouted the captain, and his ordinarily mild eyes blazed with an angry light. "The first man who moves another step forward dies! Get back to your posts, every one of you, and be glad I don't shoot you like the dogs you are!"

Cowed by his determined demeanor, and that of the other officers, the men slunk back, and Captain Everett set about finding what damage had been done. Two sailors were sent below to inspect the hold, and the captain awaited their report with keen anxiety.

Soon the two men returned, and one said: "There seems to be nothing the matter, sir, as far as we can make out. She doesn't seem to be taking in any water."

"That's well!" exclaimed the captain, after the two men had saluted and gone forward. "It's barely possible that the ship may not be much damaged, after all, although it seems almost incredible. However, we won't find any fault with providence if it isn't."

Strange as it may seem, by what appeared to be almost a miracle the ship had come off from the encounter with a few bent bow plates and the loss of considerable paint.

Before long the ship had resumed its course, and the iceberg was falling rapidly to the rear. Bert had been the only person in the vessel's bows at the time of the collision, and he was soon encircled by a group of athletes anxious to hear the story.

"Believe me, fellows," he said, in a sober voice, "I gave us all up for lost. I thought our goose had been cooked, sure. Why, that 'berg looked as high as a mountain to me, and if we had hit it head-on it would have been all over but the shouting. It's a lucky thing the captain got warning in time to veer the steamer around a little."

Everybody realized that they had had a very close escape from death, and for the rest of the day little else was talked about. It was just such a collision as had been responsible for the speedy sinking of the great liner *Titanic* with over two

thousand souls on board. That ship had struck a glancing blow, in the same way that the *Northland* had, but was less fortunate as to the result. A great projecting sliver of ice had penetrated the ill-fated vessel's hull, and within a few hours she was lying at the bottom of the sea. Indeed, at the present moment they were but a short distance from the leviathan's last resting place, and this made them realize all the more strongly what a miraculous escape they had had.

Needless to say, every precaution was taken to insure against a repetition of their recent experience, and the ship fairly crawled along at one-quarter speed. They sighted other 'bergs at intervals, but never near enough to give them any concern, and a day or so later were safely out of the danger zone. Then Captain Everett ordered full speed resumed, and the *Northland* began to plow through the blue water at its customary good clip.

Training, which had been more or less interrupted by the recent exciting events, was resumed in good earnest, and everybody worked with a will to make up for lost time. Reddy had an eye for every athlete on board, and woe betide the man who was found shirking, even in the slightest degree. He was sure to be forced to make up his deficiencies, with some extra hard training "stunt" for good measure.

The second day after the encounter with the iceberg the sky became very overcast, and bore every sign of an approaching storm. The haze veiling the heavens became thicker and thicker, and the sun could be seen shining through it only at rare intervals, and then very faintly.

The barometer fell lower and lower, and there was every evidence of the approach of a severe storm. Nor were these warnings groundless, as they soon had occasion to find out.

Everything aboard ship was made ready, and no movable object on the decks was left unsecured. The athletes regarded the approach of the storm with feelings more of interest than anything else, but Reddy snorted his disgust.

"Everything's agin' me," he growled. "This trip so far has been nothin' but a bunch o' queer experiences that you could write a story book about, maybe, but that don't count for more than a plugged nickel when it comes to gettin' a bunch o' would-be athletes in shape to make better speed than the runners at a fat men's picnic. I just get things settled down and begin to kid meself that we're gettin' somewhere, when we go and bump into an iceberg, or some other fool stunt o' that kind. But if these fellers don't cop a few lovin' cups and medals over at the games it isn't goin' to be the iceberg that gets the blame, you can lay to that. Nix! Everybody'll say, 'Gee, I bet old

Uncle Sam's runners and jumpers would have made good if only they'd had a decent sort of a trainer along that knew a little about his job.' That's the line of chatter that'll be handed out to me, all right. This trainin' business is a thankless job, anyway, let me tell you. If the American team wins, they get all the glory and credit, but if they lose, it's yours truly that gets the blame."

"Aw, don't you worry yourself about us, Reddy," said Drake, "we're going to win every event over there, practically, and after watching our wonderful work you ought to realize that fact," and he grinned.

"Oh, sure," replied Reddy, sarcastically. "If you boys win all you think you're goin' to win, I won't kick. But I'm from the wilds of Missouri, and I've got to be shown."

Discussion of this sort lasted until the lunch bell rang, when there was a wild dive to the tables, all disputes forgotten.

After lunch, when they returned on deck, they were surprised at the appearance of the ocean. The wind, which before they went below had been blowing in fitful gusts, had now settled down to a steady gale that was increasing in violence with every hour that passed. The sea was rising rapidly, and already was dotted here and there with whitecaps. The sun had entirely disappeared, and the sky was a dull gray color.

Clouds scudded across it with terrific speed, giving an indication of the force of the wind back of them, and as the boys gazed across the tumbling waves they every one felt a thrill of something very much like apprehension.

There is something very terrifying and awe-compelling about a storm at sea, especially to those not used to it. At such time a ship seems a very small thing in the great expanse of tumbling billows and shrieking wind, and it seems almost impossible that anything constructed by man can withstand Nature's fury.

Soon the storm became so wild that most of the passengers retired below, and many of them experienced sea-sickness for the first time on the voyage, as the ship was now pitching and rolling wildly. Bert, Dick and Tom, however, stayed on deck, and felt that nothing could hire them to go down. This was an experience such as they might not have again in many a year, and they felt inclined to make the most of it.

They stayed on deck until supper time, and then went below. Several athletes were absent from the tables, and of those who were there many ate very sparingly. Not one would admit that this was due to sea-sickness, however, and indeed, there was less of this than might naturally have been expected.

They were all in such fine physical condition

that they were less affected by such an experience than the average passenger, and there were few of them who were actually "down and out."

The storm lasted two days, but on the morning of the third day had practically blown itself out. When the three comrades went up on deck the sun was shining gloriously, but the ocean was still very rough. In a few hours it had subsided noticeably, but the great billows still ran fifteen or twenty feet high. It was a wonderful sight, and one to be remembered for a lifetime. The boys gazed spellbound, and felt they would have been contented to do nothing all day but drink in the inspiring scene.

Shortly after they got on deck the lookout cried, "Ship ho!" and the boys followed the direction of his pointing finger. At first they could make out nothing, but in a few minutes they glimpsed a vessel lifted up on the crest of a monster wave, and about a mile from their course.

As they drew nearer it became evident that the vessel was a partial or entire wreck. She had been a three-masted schooner, as they could tell from the stumps of the masts projecting from her deck, but they had all gone by the board.

One was still fastened to the ship by a mass of tangled rigging, and every once in a while would be washed against the side with a crash.

The vessel was low in the water, and it was evident that she was sinking.

The *Northland's* course was altered so as to bring her alongside the dismantled vessel, and the athletes, every one of whom by this time was on deck, crowded to the rail, to get a closer glimpse of the wreck.

CHAPTER XII

The Ocean's Prey

IT was indeed a scene of awful wreckage on which they gazed. The gale had played havoc with the unfortunate vessel, and what with the aid of the mighty waves had almost completely demolished it. The bulwarks were battered and broken, where the masts had crushed them in falling overboard. Broken and splintered planks strewed the deck, and everything was bound together by tangled masses of cordage. The bridge had been torn from its fastenings at one end, and sagged down to the deck. All the davits were empty, with the exception of two in which boats were still hanging. The reason for this was plain, as they both had huge holes stove in their planking, and could not possibly have been repaired in less than several days.

Altogether it presented a sad spectacle, and bore mute testimony to the terrific violence of the storm through which they had just passed. There was no sign of life on board, but nevertheless Captain Everett decided to send a boat to investigate, on the off chance of picking up

some wounded or sick person who might have been overlooked in the last mad launching of the boats.

Accordingly, a boat was lowered, and certain members of the crew told off to man her. "Gee!" exclaimed Tom, who with Dick, Bert, and most of the other athletes, was an interested spectator of these proceedings, "I'd give 'bout ten years of my life to be able to go with them. I don't suppose there's any chance of that, though, hang it!"

"Not a chance in the world," replied Bert, but then he hesitated a minute, and said, "But wait, hold on a minute. I may be able to get us on, after all."

"How are you going to do it?" questioned Dick, incredulously, but already Bert was making a bee-line for the captain.

When he could get Captain Everett's attention he asked to be allowed to visit the wreck with his two companions. At first he would not even listen, but Bert begged so hard that he finally consented.

"Very well," he answered, rather dubiously, "I suppose I'll have to let you go, but just the same I wish you had asked some other favor. However, I don't suppose any very great harm can come from it, so you have my permission, Wilson. I am trusting you to be careful and not

endanger the lives of you or your two companions."

"Thanks awfully," said Bert, "and you may rest assured that we will take every precaution," and Bert turned and raced back to his companions.

"It's all right, fellows!" he yelled. "The captain says we can go, and everything's settled. Make out I'm not the champion little fixer of this crowd of rescuing heroes."

"You sure are," admitted Dick. "We've got to hand it to you. But tell us the magic word. Let us in on the secret, and tell us how you did it."

"Oh, I'll tell you all about it later on," replied Bert. "I haven't time now, because they're holding the boat for us as it is."

Captain Everett, true to his promise, had given orders to the crew to take the three comrades with them, and they awaited their arrival with much impatience. They had not long to wait, however, for in another few seconds the three had raced across the deck at a pace that did credit to their training, and tumbled into the boat. Then the sailors gave way with a will.

The graceful boat fairly flew over the ocean, which by this time had become much smoother. Occasionally some wave higher than the rest would dash against the sides and send a silvery

shower of spray over them, and without careful seamanship it would have been no very difficult matter to swamp the frail craft.

However, they reached the wreck without mishap, and then the question arose as to the best way to board the hulk. The splintered mast washing against the side of the ship nearest to their own vessel made it impossible to land on that side, so they rowed around under the stern of the wreck. Here her name was printed in prominent black letters: the Mary Carpenter, of New York. Continuing to the other side, they had small difficulty in picking up a trailing rope and making their little boat fast. Then, one after the other, they went up the rope hand over hand until all the crew were on the littered deck with the exception of one sailor who was left to take care of the boat. The boys had no choice but to follow suit, but they tackled the feat with many misgivings. It is not as easy a thing as it may sound to climb hand over hand up a slippery cable, with a seething ocean below, and the ship to which the rope is attached jerking and plunging in every direction. Fortunately, their nerve and good training enabled them to negotiate the perilous passage without accident, and they were soon standing on the deck of the wreck.

Mr. Pollard, the officer commanding the expedition, led the way, picking his way over piled

and tumbled wreckage that told its own story of storm and destruction.

He made directly for the cabin, followed by the others. As they neared it they could distinguish a muffled barking, and Dick exclaimed, "Well, what do you know about that, fellows! They've left in such a hurry that they've left their dog behind. It begins to look as though we might have a chance to rescue something, anyway."

"Doesn't it, though?" said Tom, and the boys could hardly restrain their eagerness to break open the door imprisoning the unfortunate animal.

They were not long in reaching it, but found the door blocked, apparently by some heavy object inside. Several of the sailors set their brawny shoulders against the door, however, and it burst inward with a crash. From the opening dashed a big white bulldog, running full tilt into Tom and fairly knocking him off his feet.

"For the love of Mike!" exclaimed Tom, as he picked himself up, "what hit me anyway? Was it an elephant, or what?"

As soon as the others could recover from their laughter, they began making overtures to the dog, who had rushed up into the bows and now regarded them suspiciously. "Poor old fellow," said Bert, "I guess he thought the end of

the world had come, or something equally bad. He doesn't seem to like our looks very much now, though, does he?"

"Well, if he does, he conceals his feelings very successfully," said Dick. "He may become better tempered, though, when he sees that we're trying to introduce ourselves properly."

Indeed, the dog seemed more frightened than vicious, and presently began to wag his tail feebly. After much coaxing he came toward them, and Bert ventured to pat his head. The dog licked his hand affectionately, and wagged his tail, or what he called his tail, as hard as he knew how. "Say, fellows," said Bert, seized by a sudden inspiration, "let's take him back with us and make him our mascot. I have a feeling that he'll bring us all the luck in the world."

"Great idea," agreed Tom and Dick, and adopted the ship-wrecked one forthwith. The suggestion of a sailor that he hadn't brought much luck to the vessel which he was found fell on deaf ears, and the boys returned to the search of the ship, followed unquestioningly by their latest acquisition.

Inside the dark cabin everything was in a confused state fitly matching that of objects outside. The berths were tumbled, and the bed-coverings were strewn about the floor. A small iron safe set in flush with the wall was open, and empty.

A few stray coins were scattered here and there about the floor, and the first comers pounced eagerly on these, to save as souvenirs. A further search failed to reveal the ship's log or any of her papers, but of course this was not to be wondered at, as only in a case of the most dire peril will a commander leave his vessel without these.

There were three other state-rooms opening out of the main cabin, but after they had been thoroughly ransacked nothing of any value was found in them.

"Well, men," said Mr. Pollard, "I guess there's no use in staying her any longer. Evidently there's no living soul on board, and as far as I can see there seems to be nothing worth taking away."

Accordingly, after one last glance around the forlorn cabin, they had turned and were preparing to go on deck, when they were startled by a shout from above and the man who had been left to take care of the small boat poked his shaggy head inside the door.

"You'd better make haste, sir," he exclaimed, in an excited voice, addressing Mr. Pollard, "this old tub's settling fast, sir, and I think she's about due to go under in something less than a quarter of an hour."

Accordingly Mr. Pollard gave the order to

return to their boat, but the words had hardly left his mouth when the wreck gave a sickening lunge, and the face of more than one in the little party went pale.

"Step lively, now, men!" ordered the officer, in a tense voice. He had no need to repeat his order, for the ship began to list over at a sharp angle, and the men broke into a run. The sight that met their eyes as they leaped up the stairs to the deck was terrifying. When they had gone below, the deck had been perhaps four feet above the water, but now it was almost level with the waves at its highest part, and where it had listed over the water was lapping above the boards.

A shout went up from the sailors, and they made a wild dash for the boat. Into it they tumbled, pell mell, and last of all came the three boys and Mr. Pollard. They leaped into the boat without selecting their landing place very carefully, and those nearest the oars snatched them up and began pulling for dear life. They were not in unison, however, and the boat fairly crawled away from the side of the doomed vessel. It seemed like some horrible nightmare, in which deadly peril is seen approaching, but from which the sleeper is unable to escape. Fortunately, both Dick and Bert had managed to get hold of an oar on opposite sides of the boat, and

they at least kept their heads and worked together.

They knew that if the wreck sank before they got one or two hundred feet from it, the whole boat load would be drawn under by the suction. They tugged and pulled desperately, and gradually, aided to some extent by the cooler of the crew, drew away from the dangerous vicinity. In their excitement they had forgotten the poor dog, but now they were reminded of his presence by seeing him come to a broken place in the bulwarks and gaze after them with beseeching barks and whines.

Dick looked at Bert, but the latter shook his head. "No, we can't take a chance and go back for him, Dick," he said, "it would be staking all our lives against that of a dog. We'll have to leave him, that's all."

"Gee, but I hate to do that," exclaimed Tom, "maybe we can get him to follow us," and he started whistling to the dog.

The animal seemed uncertain what to do, but after giving one despairing glance around at the dismantled deck, he appeared to make up his mind, and plunged boldly overboard. Those in the boat would have liked to wait for him, but they dare not. They were not yet at a safe distance, and the wreck was going down fast now. She was listed considerably to port, and they

could see the waves washing further and further up the sloping deck.

Slowly, slowly, the unfortunate schooner settled, causing little ripples and eddies in the water surrounding it, which by this time was almost calm. Now almost half the deck was under water, and then the stern gradually rose in the air, while the bows pointed downward into the green depths. Slowly, deliberately, she slid under the waves, and one more proud ship was added to the ocean's heavy toll.

A deep sigh went up from those in the little boat, partly of thankfulness at their own escape, and partly of sorrow over the fate of the wrecked schooner.

The poor bull dog had disappeared, and the boys gave him up for lost. Suddenly Tom cried, "look, fellows, look! He must have been dragged under by the suction, but I just saw him come up!"

Sure enough, over the spot where the ship had gone down they could see a little white speck bobbing up and down.

"Give way, men!" ordered Mr. Pollard, "we might as well pick the plucky little scamp up. It's easy to see *he's* no quitter."

The men were nothing loth, and were soon alongside the game little swimmer. Tom leaned over the side, and grasping him by the scruff of

his neck, pulled him safely inboard. The dog feebly licked his hand, but then lay in a little dejected heap in the bottom of the boat, panting heavily.

"Well, old sport, fate has certainly been handing you a rather rough deal lately, hasn't she?" asked Bert, addressing the dog, and was answered by a faint wag of the stubby tail.

"We'll have to give him a name, I suppose," said Dick, "what shall we call him fellows? Suggest something."

This was a serious matter, for of course a mascot has got to have an appropriate name. 'Sport,' 'Nero,' 'Prince,' and many others were proposed, but were finally rejected in favor of Bingo, which had a college flavor and seemed to suit him very well.

By the time this question had been settled they had reached the *Northland,* and were soon on board. Last of all Bingo was hoisted over the side, and introduced to the assembled athletes as the team mascot. He was received with the greatest enthusiasm, and immediately proceeded to make friends with everybody.

"I always thought we'd clean things up at the Olympics," remarked Drake, "but now I feel more certain of it than ever. The only thing we lacked is now supplied. I must confess, now that the trial is past, that having no mascot has

kept me awake many a night and seriously affected my appetite," he said, with a grin.

"Gee, if anything has been affecting your appetite, Drake," said one of the others, "I'd like to see you when you were in first class shape and could really eat. I think this bally old hooker would be out of grub in less than a week."

"Oh, yes, that's right, pick on me, just because I'm small and weak," grinned Drake, who was something like six feet two inches tall, and weighed a hundred and ninety-five pounds, "why don't you go and get some poor victim of your own size once in a while."

"Gee, it must be awful to be feeble and puny the way you are, Drake," laughed Bert, "you certainly do arouse my pity. What you need is a tonic to build you up."

"Yes," chimed in Tom, "poor Drake's fading fast. All he could do to-day was to throw the discus a measly little hundred and thirty feet and a fraction. That sure is an indication of falling powers."

"Yes, I've noticed how he's weakening," remarked Axtell. "Why, he hasn't got anything at all on that discus except a mile a minute speed and a world of strength. Otherwise he's certainly all in."

Drake stood all this chaffing with a good natured grin, for he was in such good condition

that he could afford to have people joke about it. He had been doing better and better all the time, and nobody on board had the slightest doubt that he would break all records at the coming Olympic.

He was really a marvel of strength, but some of the sailors on board, while they admitted that "the big guy could sure throw that plate around" still believed that at least one of their number had the 'goods' on him. They pinned their faith on a big, red haired Irishman of their number, who had won fame in many a rough and tumble battle, and swore that no 'college guy' who ever lived could throw him. The athletes had equal faith in Drake, however, and knew that he had at one time taken considerable interest in scientific wrestling. This fact, combined with his phenomenal strength, made them certain he could throw the big sailor.

For some time there had been considerable controversy between the athletes and the crew, all in a good natured strain, however. The sailors were anxious to pit their champion against Drake, but the latter had felt that such a contest would interfere with his training, and so had held off.

That morning, however, the big Irish sailor had made a vaunting remark that had "gotten Drake's goat," and made the big fellow resolve to bring matters to an issue once and for all.

He confided his resolve to Bert and a few chosen pals, and they were glad to hear it, for the crew had all along adopted a skeptical attitude toward the athletes, and referred to them more than once as the "college kids."

Accordingly they decided to challenge the big sailor that very night, and Dick was intrusted with the task. They decided to meet the man (Donahue by name), on his own terms, so that afterward the sailors could have no possible grounds of complaint.

In pursuance of this plan Dick went forward to the sailors' quarters immediately after supper, and found Donahue and some of his friends lying in their berths smoking black clay pipes and swapping yarns, as was their custom off watch, when they felt strong enough to stand the strain.

"And phwat's the matter now, young felly?" inquired Donahue, when he saw Dick coming down the ladder. "Sit down awhile and make yersilf comfortable. I was jist goin' to tell my mates o' the time Oi was wrecked on a cannibal island an' married the chief's daughter, an——"

But here Dick interrupted him. "I'm afraid I won't have time to listen just now," he said. "I've come from my friend Drake (the discus thrower, you know), and he wants me to say that he thinks he can throw the best wrestler you've got here, bar none."

"Oh, he does, does he?" growled Donahue, "all right, me bye, you just go back and tell him that O'im ready for him any minute of the day, or night too fer that matter. How does he want to run the match? Under a lot o' fancy rules, Oi suppose."

"Not on your tintype," replied Dick, warmly, "this is to be catch as catch can, and the best man wins. You haven't any objection to that, have you?"

"Divil a bit," said the sailor, "thim terms suits me all right. What do ye say mates? When shall we run off the match?"

"What would be the matter with to-morrow evening right after supper?" inquired Dick, "you might as well take your licking then as any other time, Donahue, and get the agony over with."

"Lickin', is ut?" said the big Irishman, grimly. "Lickin' it may be, but it won't be me as gets it, you can lay to that. Bring on your man after supper to-morrow evenin' at about this time, and Oi'll stretch me muscles a little before goin' to sleep. Me heart's full o' pity for your man, though. It seems a shame to do ut," and he grinned and gave a tremendous and elaborate yawn.

"All right, we'll be here," replied Dick, "only if you've got any sympathy to spare, I'd advise

saving it for your own private use. You'll need plenty of it."

"Well, that's as may be," replied Donahue, and after settling a few more details Dick left.

Returning to his companions, he acquainted them with the result of his mission, and Drake expressed himself as perfectly satisfied with the conditions.

"I don't anticipate much trouble," he said. "I guess there's no doubt but what that harp is pretty strong, but its simply a matter of muscle against brain, and muscle doesn't usually make out very well in that case."

"Yes, but you've got to be mighty careful," warned Dick. "That sailor is one of the strongest men I ever saw, and is capable of giving you a good deal of trouble. I'll be much surprised if he doesn't give you a mighty hard tussle."

"Oh, I don't doubt that for a minute," replied Drake, "still I think I have the goods on him. We won't have to wait very long to find out, that's sure."

After a little further discussion in the same vein the boys dispersed for the night.

Of course, Reddy had gathered a pretty good idea of what was going forward, and at first he had decided to interfere, but later changed his mind. "I guess it won't hurt the boy," he reflected, "he's tough as a piece of armor plate,

and it may do him good to give his muscles a good work out. There's nothing like a little excitement once in a while to tone a man up and put him in the pink of condition."

Accordingly Reddy "winked his other eye," as the saying goes, and let the boys go on with their preparations unmolested.

CHAPTER XIII

A Husky Antagonist

THE next day passed quietly, and the athletes spent it profitably in unbroken training exercises, and Reddy felt that they were rounding into form in a manner to suit even his critical eye. He watched the runners circling the track, the jumpers practising, and last, but not least, the discus and hammer throwers hurling the heavy weights from the stern of the ship. His sharp eye watched Drake's performance with particular care, but the latter showed no sign of concern over the coming contest, and laughed and joked with the others as though nothing unusual were in the wind. At his last attempt he gave an unusually savage heave to the heavy disc, and it sailed far out over the shining, sparkling water. The cord attached to it whizzed through the air, and when pulled in the plate was found to have traveled one hundred and thirty-two feet flat.

"Good for you, Drake. That's the kind of stuff I want to see!" exclaimed the trainer, and Drake flushed a little with pleasure. Reddy gave

so little praise that when he did speak well of any performance his words had a double value. Which was perhaps his object. Who knows?

"Well, it wasn't so bad, I suppose," said Drake, "but I guess I'll rest on my laurels now, and take it easy the rest of the day. I'll bet any money that before we get to Berlin I'll be crowding the record for all its worth, though."

"Maybe so, maybe so," growled Reddy, who seemed to regret his praise, "but you've got to keep plugging, and plugging hard, if you expect to do it. That's the trouble with a lot of athletes, and a good many others who aren't athletes; they quit just when the goal's in sight, and lose all their effort for nothing. Its usually the last few yards of a race that are the hardest, and its then that the quitting streak shows up in a lot of people."

"Well, I'm not going to quit," said Drake, a little resentfully.

"I know that, me boy," replied Reddy, in a softer voice. "Me little sermon wasn't meant for you."

One of the hammer throwers created a diversion here, by getting his string tangled in the bulwarks, and not noticing it until he had hurled the heavy missile. Before it had traveled half its distance it reached the end of the cord, which snapped like a cobweb under the weight. "Good

night," exclaimed the thrower, gazing ruefully at the frazzled end of the cord as it whipped inboard, "there's a hammer gone to visit Davy Jones, all right."

"Gee!' laughed Tom, who was sitting near, "I hope it doesn't hit the old gentleman on the head. He may not appreciate the gift, if it did."

"I wouldn't blame him much for feeling peeved," said Dick, "it wouldn't be the most comfortable thing in the world to have that drop in on you unexpected-like. I think the old sport would have right on his side, myself."

"I think you're right, Dick," said Bert, "and I think that to atone for the insult we ought to throw old Snyder overboard. What do you think, fellows? It might keep Dave from wreaking his vengeance on the whole ship. A stitch in time saves nine, you know."

"Overboard with him," yelled the laughing group, but Drake held up his hand in silence.

"You seem to forget, fellows," he said, in a solemn voice, "that as yet we're not absolutely certain that the old gentleman has been hit. I suggest, therefore, that we spare Snyder until Mr. Jones calls for him in person. Then we will hand him over without protest, of course, in fact, gladly."

"Oh, well, I suppose we might as well postpone the pleasure, seeing that you suggest it,"

said Bert. "It's a big disappointment, though."

Accordingly the boys solemnly agreed to spare Snyder's life for the time being, and the baited hammer thrower went forward to get a new hammer from the reserve supply.

He soon returned, and this time was more careful of his string before letting fly. He showed well in the practice, and Reddy was well pleased with his work. "I guess he'll do," he thought to himself, "he's getting slowly better all the time, and that's what I like to see. These 'phenoms' aren't all they're cracked up to be. They show up well for a while, and then like as not they go all the pieces. I'll take a chance on a good, steady, hard working man every time. They're the ones you can count on in the pinches."

Practice went on without further interruption until lunch time, and everybody did ample justice to the well cooked meal. The constant exercise, combined with the invigorating sea air, gave them appetites that it took much to satisfy, and which caused wondering comment in the galley.

"Zey eat more zan I zink possible," the little French chef had exclaimed at the beginning of the voyage, with uplifted hands. "I cook an' cook, and still zey have not too much. Mon Dieu! Zey will drive me—wat you call heem—bughouse. Eet is no wondaire zey are strong."

In one way the little cook was not displeased,

however, for at any rate he could complain of no lack of appreciation of his cooking.

After everything had been demolished the athletes repaired to the deck, and did whatever pleased them for a couple of hours. Some played deck games, while others were content to read or gaze out idly over the sparkling blue ocean. The weather was ideal, and since the storm that had wrecked the schooner hardly a cloud had appeared in the sky. Bingo appreciated the fair weather immensely, and began to get his looks back, which had suffered somewhat under his recent hardships. He was now firmly intrenched in the affections of every athlete on board, and had been accepted unreservedly as their mascot.

He was friendly with everybody, but his real affection seemed divided between Bert, Tom and Dick. He always followed them around, and evidently considered them his especial guardians, as they had been his rescuers.

They in turn saw that he had plenty to eat, and made a great pet of him generally. He seemed to take a deep interest in everything that went on, and would watch the boys training with the wisest look imaginable on his doggish face.

This particular afternoon he was not in sight, however, when Dick and Bert went to hunt up Drake. They found him finally, stretched out in

a steamer chair, and reading a book as though he had nothing in the world on his mind.

"Sit down, fellows, and take a load off your feet," he said, as Bert and Dick came up, "what's the good word this afternoon?"

"Oh, there's nothing particular doing," replied Bert, as he took his seat on the edge of the rail, balancing back and forth with the motion of the ship at imminent risk of being spilled into the ocean, "it seems like the calm preceding the storm."

"By storm meaning to-night, I suppose," said Drake smiling, "but I'm not worrying about it, so why should you?"

"Well, I suppose we don't need to, in that case," replied Bert. "I'm glad you feel so sure about it, though. Do you feel in good shape?"

"Never better in my life," replied Drake, with a tremendous yawn. "I'm just debating in my mind whether to kill this audacious seaman or just put him on the sick list for a week or two."

"Gee, you just about hate yourself, don't you Drake?" asked Bert, and they all laughed.

"Just the same you want to be watching all the time," said Bert, "the way this fellow is used to wrestling, everything goes, and you want to look out for fouls. That's the thing that's worrying me."

"Never fear," replied Drake, "I used to take

lessons from a man who knew the game backward, fair tricks and foul. He taught me a lot while I was with him, and I guess I'll know what to expect. And fore-warned is fore-armed, you know."

"Well, that was all I was afraid of," said Bert. "I haven't a doubt in the world that you are more than a match for him when it comes to straight wrestling. I'm not so awfully flabby myself, but I know you always manage to put me down."

"Oh, that's just because it's out of your line," replied Drake, "mere brute strength doesn't count so very much in wrestling. It's like boxing, or baseball, or anything else; it's head work that is the deciding factor."

"All right, old sock, get to it then," said Bert, "don't be afraid to eat plenty of beef steak for supper to-night. That's the stuff will pull you through."

"Right you are!" returned Drake, I'll be all right, all-right. There'll be nothing to it, take it from me."

"Well, that's what we like to hear," said Bert, reassured as he and Dick strolled away. They could talk of little else the rest of the afternoon, and became more and more excited as the appointed time drew near. At supper their usual appetites were not in evidence, and for the first

time since they left port they failed to give the excellent meal the attention it deserved.

Supper despatched, they hunted up Drake, and together with Tom talked with him until it was close to eight o'clock. Then they walked forward, and descended to the seamen's quarters. At intervals other athletes, who had been 'let in' on the secret, kept dropping in, until a goodly company had arrived.

"Well, ye're on toime, Oi see," remarked Donahue, "and how do ye feel, youngster?" addressing Drake. "Are ye ready to have yer back broke?"

"About the same as you are, I guess," replied Drake, nonchalantly, and his companions grinned. It was evident that their candidate was without fear, at any rate.

The preliminaries were soon arranged, and Drake and the sailor faced each other at opposite extremities of a cleared space perhaps twenty feet square. Bert had been selected to act as second for Drake, and a big Swede, Olsen by name, had been nominated as Donahue's second. Both Drake and the sailor were dressed in gray flannel shirts and short athletic trunks, and under this thin covering their splendid physical development could be plainly seen.

Donahue's muscles were knotted and bunched, while Drake's lay flatter and were much less

prominent. To the untrained eye the sailor seemed much the stronger of the two, but Bert knew better. Otherwise they were much the same height and weight, and there seemed little to choose between them.

The referee gave the starting signal, and Drake and the seaman approached each other warily, each stepping lightly as a cat. In spite of their boasting before the contest, each man realized that he would have all he could do to win, and they were careful accordingly. At first they circled agilely round and round, each seeking for a favorable opening. Suddenly Drake sprang in, but before he could secure the hold he wanted, the nimble sailor had leaped aside, and for a few seconds they stood looking at each other. Then the wary circling began again, but this time it was Donahue who rushed in. He was more fortunate than Drake, and secured a hold. Drake also got a good grip on him, however, and for a moment they stood quiet, gathering their strength for the real struggle. Then with a sudden giant heave Donahue sought to lift his adversary off his feet, but Drake was as supple as a snake, and with a convulsive movement tore himself out of the sailor's grasp and sprang free. Donahue was after him in a trice, and again they grappled, but this time it was Drake who got the better hold. With a heave

and a lunge he lifted his giant opponent entirely clear of the floor, and sent him crashing down on his side. He followed up his advantage like a flash, but in spite of his great bulk the sailor was very quick, and had recovered somewhat, so that, try as he might, Drake was unable to put him on his back. Finally he was forced to give up the attempt, and the seaman sprang to his feet. They were about to engage again when the referee stepped in and declared a short time for rest. Both men were panting heavily, and were evidently in need of it.

They retired to their respective sides of the square, and Bert anxiously asked Drake if he felt all right. "Sure thing," responded the latter, "give me a minute to get my wind and I'll be as strong as ever. That fellow is a mighty husky brute, though. I've certainly had my hands full with him."

On his part, the big Irishman felt surprised that he had not ended the contest before this, and so expressed himself to his second. "Begorry," he muttered. "The young felley knows all the tricks o' the game, and then some. I went to jam me elbow into him when we were mixin' it up there, and he blocked me as neat as ever you see. Curse me if the young spalpheen didn't seem to be ixpictin' it."

"Yah, he bane foxy one, you bet," responded

the Swede, "but you yust go in an' smash him up now. He bane easy for you."

At this point the referee announced the recommencement of the contest, and again the wrestlers fenced for a hold. Then they dashed in, grasped each other, and for a moment stood motionless as though rooted to the spot. Gradually, each began to exert his strength, ounce by ounce, seeking by sheer brute force to bend the other backward. Their muscles swelled and stood out under the skin, but at first neither seemed to gain an advantage. Then, slowly, very slowly, the big sailor bent backward—further and further—until he could stand it no longer. With a yell he collapsed and went to the floor, with Drake on top of him. In a second the athlete had the giant's shoulders touching the floor, and the referee called a "down."

Then the contest should have been over, but the defeated man would not have it so. With a hoarse shout of rage he sprang to his feet and rushed straight at Drake. When the latter saw him coming he set himself for the onslaught with a jerk, and a dangerous light burned in his eyes.

The Irishman dashed for him with the speed and force of a wild bull, and Drake ducked slightly. Then as the man reached him he grasped him by the wrists, and straightened up with a great heave. The sailor went flying over

his head and shot through the air like a projectile from a gun.

A cry went up from eveyrbody there, for it seemed certain that he would be killed. Fortunately, however, his momentum was so great that it carried him clear to the wall, where he dove head first into a bunk. For a moment he lay stunned, but then staggered weakly out, shaking his head from side to side.

"Be all the saints," he gasped, "Oi've met me match this night and got the lickin' of me life. The best man won, that's all Oi've got to say. Shake hands before ye go, will ye, kid?"

"Sure," said Drake frankly, extending his hand. "You gave me a hard tussle, and deserved to win. I hope I never have to stand up against you again," he added, with a grin, "for you're certainly a dandy."

Then he and his followers filed out, and returned to the training quarters. The first person they saw when they entered was Reddy, and he grinned broadly as they came in. Bert had hinted pretty broadly at the object of their visit to the forecastle, but had not told Reddy openly what was in the wind, as in his official capacity the trainer would not have felt in a position to sanction the affair. As it was, he awaited news of the outcome with considerable anxiety, and seemed much relieved when the whole con-

test was recounted to him and he learned of its successful termination.

"Well, to bed with you now, you worthless spalpeens," he said at the end of the recital. But as they were dispersing to their bunk he called, "I'm mighty glad you won, Drake."

The next morning Drake was on deck and practising at the usual time, feeling no ill effects from his strenuous experience other than a slight stiffness, which bothered him very little. In a couple of days even this wore off, and the next day but one from the date of the exciting contest he broke the record for discus throwing by a matter of almost six inches, thus justifying the trainer's judgment.

As for the crew, they treated Drake with marked respect, and from that day forward nothing more was heard from them except praise concerning "college athletes," and especially "plate-throwers."

CHAPTER XIV

A Fearful Awakening

IT was evening on board the Northland, cool, calm and altogether delightful. Just enough of twilight lingered to make visible the broad expanse of ocean, so calm that, if it were not so vast, one might almost think it an inland lake. A silver-crescent moon, growing brighter every moment as the soft light waned, cast it's bright reflection into the quiet water where the dancing ripples broke and scattered it into myriad points of gleaming light. As the darkness grew, the stars came out and added their beauty to the night.

To the groups of young athletes, lying at ease in steamer chairs on the deck, the cool quiet of the perfect evening was most welcome, for it had been a strenuous day. The hours allotted to practice had been filled to their limit, and now it was luxury to lie with tired muscles relaxed and enjoy the peace and beauty of the quiet night.

For a long time no one spoke, but Tom, who could never bear to be quiet very long, nor let

other people be, broke the silence by wondering what Berlin was like.

"Why," answered Reddy who had twice visited the great German city, "it's fine, but it sure is laid out queer, with the river running straight through it, cutting it clean in two. They've had to build a many bridges, for the river branches off in more than one direction and you have to be crossing over the water every little while."

"I've read about those bridges," said Bert, "and of the eight immense marble statues that are to be seen on one of them. The statues represent the different stages of a soldier's career. On another is an equestrian bronze statue or Frederick of Germany."

"Well," said loyal Tom, "that's all right for Berlin, but I think we've left behind in little old New York, about everything that is really worth seeing."

Every one laughed, and Axtell said, "There's one thing in Berlin, you must admit, that not even New York can boast; the thing we are all more interested in just now than anything else in the world, the great Olympic athletic field."

This brought them around to athletics again and the talk ran on different events and their hope of success in each until Dick rebelled. "Do let's talk about something else once in a while,"

he remonstrated, "it's a wonder we don't all dream about the Stadium and get up in our sleep and go through the motions. They say your dreams are influenced by what has made the strongest impression on your mind during the day. At least that's the theory."

"Well," laughed Drake, "I can confirm your theory in part, anyway; for last night I had the most vivid dream of a hurling match. I suppose that was because I thought of very little else all day."

There was quite a little discussion then as to whether dreams could be controlled by the will or were entirely involuntary.

"Well," Bert said finally, "as opinions seem about evenly divided, I propose that we all go to bed to-night with a determination not to dream of any form of athletics, and, in the morning report our success or failure."

In order to give their minds a different bent, they sang college songs for the next hour, then bade each other good-night, and went to put their theory to the test.

Perhaps the very determination not to dream of the athletic contest made it more certain that he would dream of just that; but, at any rate, Drake did have a most vivid dream.

He thought that the great day of the meet had arrived, and, at last, the hour to which he had

looked forward for so many weeks. The great audience had assembled and sat in hushed expectancy, while he stood ready with muscles tense and discus poised.

So real was the dream that his body followed it's movements. Slipping out of bed he moved noiselessly, still sleeping, up the stairs, and, as directly as if it were broad daylight instead of black night, on to the practice space on the training deck, where a portion of the rail had been removed to facilitate the throwing of the discus. Here, taking his place in the dream, within the circle of space allotted to him, he stood firm, poised the discus and stepped forward a couple of paces as he threw. But, alas, that circle of space was only in his dream and in reality he had passed through the opening in the rail. The two paces carried him over the edge of the vessel, through forty flying feet of space, and plunged him into the dark waters beneath.

The plunge awoke him. As he rose to the surface he instinctively struck out and kept himself afloat. Bewildered and half dazed, he asked himself, "Where am I? How in the name of everything that's horrible, did I get here in the water?" Vain questions to which there came no answer.

He had fallen with his back to the ship, but now, as full consciousness came to him, he turned,

and, to his horror, saw the lights of the *Northland* drawing steadily away from him. Without stopping to reason, he began shouting at the top of his voice, and swimming with all his strength after the departing steamer. His one impulse was to reach it, his one thought that he must not be left alone there in mid-ocean.

For many minutes he swam madly, desperately, but soon the brief insanity passed, his self-control returned, and he realized the uselessness of the vain struggle. He ceased swimming and, alternately treading water and floating, to rest his strained muscles, tried to collect his thoughts and determine what to do.

As he floated, he forced his mind backward. One by one the events of the evening on board the *Northland* came back to him. The quiet loveliness of the night, the talk about Berlin, about the events so soon to take place and about dreams——"

"Ah, dreams," he said aloud. Like a flash he remembered his vivid dream of the Olympic field in Berlin; remembered how in his dream he stood ready to take his part in the great contest; remembered the strained muscles, the poised discus, the forward step—ah, that was it! He felt certain that now he had the reason for his present desperate plight. He must have walked in his sleep and, in his sleep, slipped overboard.

This plausible solution of the mystery was some small satisfaction. Question after question assailed him. How long after he tumbled into his berth had this happened? Was it hours afterward? If so, it would soon be daylight and then he might be able to sight some object that would help him. Had it happened shortly after he fell asleep? Then long hours must pass before the dawn. Stout, husky fellow and strong swimmer that he was, could he keep afloat through those endless hours? He knew that an ordinarily strong man could keep himself afloat five or six hours, seldom longer.

It was eleven o'clock when he went to his berth. The sun rose at this time of the year at about half-past four, so that would make five and a half hours at the most; but the probability was that an hour or more had elapsed before the dream came. That would leave four hours or so before dawn. They would not miss him before breakfast and that would double the four hours.

He did not doubt that they would search for him. If the *Northland* had been a passenger steamer, sailing under regular schedule, she would not have been able to waste hours, perhaps for one missing passenger. Being under special charter, her time was at her own disposal, and he knew that she would return over her

course and send her small boats in every direction in search of him. But at least twelve or fourteen hours must elapse before any aid could reach him.

As this terrible realization came upon him, he was filled with despair. What use to continue to struggle for the few hours that his strength would hold out? It would only be a drawing out of misery with death surely at the end. Better by far to hold himself, deliberately under water and in a few brief minutes end it all. But, no, he would not. He would keep himself afloat till daylight. Perhaps the dawn would show him some floating spar or piece of wreckage to which he might cling. It was his duty to preserve his life as long as possible. If at last he must yield himself to old ocean, he could at least die with the consciousness that he had not yielded like a coward, but had fought on until the end with dauntless determination.

At that moment, as if to reward his courage and manly resolution, a faint light began to creep over land and ocean. With a thrill he realized that the dawn, which he had feared was hours distant, was at hand, and hope sprang anew. But as the light grew and the great, desolate expanse of ocean spread itself out before his eager eye, despair again seized him.

On every side nothing but that great stretch

of water. Not a speck as large as his hand upon its calm, cruel surface.

But wait!—what was that black object that caught his eye as he rose to the crest of a wave? Was it only imagination? a shape born of his desperate desire? No, there it was again. It was real.

Swimming with renewed energy he steered straight for the floating object, but paused again as a new fear gripped his heart. What if it were the fin of a shark! If that was what it was, then he was just hurrying to meet a terrible death. He would rather drown than suffer such a death as that. A few moments he hesitated, but the thought that sharks were not so numerous in the Atlantic as in the Pacific reassured him, and he said aloud, "Well, it is a last chance, and I'll take it."

Resolutely, now, he swam on, until as he rose to the crest of a large wave, he found himself near enough to observe that what he had feared at a distance was a shark's fin was a floating cask. He instantly recognized it as one which had been rolled near to the rail of the *Northland* for the fellows to sit on. He must have touched it as he went overboard and it had fallen with him.

With a cry of joy he reached it, and, after a failure or two, succeeded in grasping it firmly.

Now he had a much better view of the ocean. Again he cast his eager eyes across that great waste of water—and his heart nearly stopped beating. At no great distance and bearing directly toward him was a large steamer flying the French colors. Would she see him or would she pass him by? He scarcely dared hope he would be seen, he was such a speck on that boundless ocean. He could only wait with heart aching with suspense.

Nearer and still nearer came the great ship, until, after what seemed an age of waiting, she was within hailing distance. Eagerly he scanned her for sight of any living being, but he could see no one moving on her decks.

Stripping the jacket of his pajamas from his shoulders he waved it desperately, and shouted with all his strength. Ah, she is passing, she does not see him! But just as all hope seemed lost, he saw hurrying figures on board, and a ringing voice came over the water. "Have courage, we will come to you."

A great revulsion of feeling passed over him and never afterward could he remember just what happened after that voice reached him, except that he clung, dazed and almost fainting, to the cask for what seemed hours, and then—nothingness!

When he again opened his eyes, he was lying

at length on the deck of the strange steamer, and kind faces were bending over him.

His story was soon told and he was overjoyed to learn that the steamer was fitted with wireless apparatus and that a message would be sent as soon as possible to the *Northland*. Almost before he was missed, the news of his safety would reach them. With thankful heart and in ineffable content he lay, finding it hard to assure himself that death had passed him by, and life, sweeter than ever before, stretched before him.

On board the *Northland* the breakfast hour had come, and all took their places at the table with unusual alacrity, as they were to report the success or failure of their effort to control dreams by their will- power. Soon all were assembled but Drake.

"Where's Drake?" was the general demand.

"He must be dreaming yet," laughed Bert. "He sure has met with failure."

"No," Axtell, who shared Drake's stateroom, assured them. "He has been up this long while. He had left his berth this morning before I awoke."

They waited a while and then, as he did not come, Axtell went to find him. In a short time he returned with the startling news that Drake did not appear to be anywhere on the ship.

"He's putting up a joke on us," said Tom with a half-hearted attempt at a grin.

Everyone hoped that this might be true, but it did not prevent a thorough search of the ship, it is needless to say, without result. Great was the consternation on board.

"What under the sun could have happened to him," Dick wondered.

"No one knows," Axtell answered anxiously. "Come on, fellows, let's have one more look. He must be hiding somewhere."

"But where, where," Tom cried, at his wit's end. "How could he have disappeared so completely?"

"That isn't the question," Bert cried impatiently. "It's up to us to find out where, if we can," and once more the search was begun.

Five minutes more of frantic search brought no reward. The fellows, now thoroughly panic-stricken, stood and looked into each other's pale faces, trying to imagine what had happened.

"He must be somewhere on the ship," Martin persisted, desperately. "Nothing else is possible."

The startling news had been carried to Captain Everett and his voice could now be heard giving orders for a most thorough search of the ship. This was done but still without avail.

At this report their last hopes were dissipated and all were forced to believe that in some mysterious way Drake had accidentally fallen overboard. At this solution of the mystery every heart was filled with frantic grief, for Drake was loved by all. Then they all felt an almost irresistible impulse to fling themselves overboard and drag him somewhere, somehow, from that sea of death.

"If he has fallen overboard," Axtell said with a choke in his voice, "he'll have no chance at all."

"Oh," Tom cried, throwing himself down in a chair, "poor, poor old Drake; and we are so powerless to help him."

"There's one chance left," Reddy comforted, striving to bring back a spark of hope to their despairing hearts. "He's right in the steamer lane and one of them may pick him up."

Eagerly they clutched at this one straw held out to them and hope was further strengthened by the fact that the *Northland* had turned and, with all steam on, was retracing her course. A faint hope, at best, they knew, for even if his splendid strength had held out till then, how could such a small speck as he must seem on that boundless ocean, be sighted from the deck of a steamer? Then, too, the *Northland* could not retrace her course exactly and the currents might

have carried the poor castaway far adrift. A forlorn hope indeed!

Click! click! went the key of the wireless, and the operator straightened in his chair as a message came over the water.

"On board the *Northland,*" it flashed," "Drake rescued this morning by French steamer *Lafayette.* Will reach Havre on Thursday at eleven A. M. Will await *Northland.* All well."

A moment and the message was in the captain's hands. Then such wild, uncontrollable joy broke out on board as the *Northland* had never before witnessed. Everybody shook everybody else by the hand, all talking at once and neither knowing nor caring what they said.

When, two days later their old comrade stood among them their joy knew no bounds. They carried him around on their shoulders and nearly killed him with their hilarious demonstrations.

"It's too good to be true," said Axtell, with his arm around his chum's shoulder, "to have you back again safe and sound. Say, fellows," he said, turning to the others, while his old smile flashed out again, "to think that all that came from walking in a dream. If that's the kind of 'stuff that dreams are made of,' may none of us ever dream again!"

CHAPTER XV

The Dynamite Ship

"IN a German port! Germany at last!"

To Tom coming slowly back from the land of dreams, the words spoken in Dick's voice sounded as if they came from a long, long distance. With an impatient little shake at being disturbed, he turned over, and was drifting away, when Bert's joyous "Right-o, Dick, Germany at last!" brought him all the way back again.

Opening his eyes, he remembered with a thrill, that the *Northland* was to reach port, the great port of Hamburg, during the night just passed, Bert and Dick, fully dressed, were gazing excitedly from their cabin portholes. At a slight sound from Tom, they pounced on him, dragged him from his berth, and landed him before one of the portholes. "Look out there," said Dick, "and then tell us what kind of a gink a fellow must be that can lie like a wooden man in his berth on such a glorious morning and with *that* to look at."

It certainly was a glorious morning, and "that" Tom had to acknowledge, was well

worth looking at. Just one glance he gave, and then dove for his clothes. He did not need Bert's "Do hurry up, lazy, and let's get on deck." His clothes went on with not one bit more attention to details than was absolutely necessary.

"Good boy!" said Dick, as Tom gave the last impatient brush to an exasperating lock on the top of his head that persisted in standing upright. "We've just an hour before breakfast, and we must take fifteen minutes of that to get everything packed up, for you know we are to go ashore immediately after breakfast."

"Hang the packing," said impatient Tom, "who wants to stay in this stuffy cabin and pack?"

"Well," Bert sensibly suggested, "let's get at it now and get it off our hands."

"Wisdom hath spoken," laughed Dick, and for the next few miuntes their cabins were filled with the sound of scurrying feet, articles slapped hastily into trunk and bag, and an impatient expression or two at a bag that would not shut, or a key that would not turn.

Bert and Tom were ready first, and "There," said Dick, as he thrust his keys into his pocket. "O. K. fellows, come on," and three eager sightseers flew from their cabin. They never forgot that next hour on deck.

Before them lay the wonderful river, its water

sparkling and gleaming in the morning sunlight. And the shipping! Steamships like their own, freight steamers, barges, tugs, craft of all sorts. The harbor, the largest on the continent, and ranking next to London, Liverpool and Glasgow in commercial importance, teemed with life. Up and down the river passed vessels of every description, some of them of a build entirely new to our three Americans. Anchor chains rattled as some steamer pushed into position. The hoarse cries of the sailors or the musical "Yo, heave ho," or its German equivalent, rang out as they ran up and down ladders at the ship's side, or bent to the task of hoisting some heavy piece of freight from steamer deck to barge. Quick commands and the ready response, "Ay, ay, sir," sounded on every side.

At their docks, freight steamers were being unloaded, or were discharging their cargoes into transportation barges fastened alongside. Busy, noisy, important little tugs blew their shrill whistles as they steamed along with some steamer or heavily laden barge in tow. Little any one in Hamburg Harbor that calm, bright, beautiful morning, dreamed that when the sun was but a little higher in the heavens, one of these same little tugs, under the command of her brave captain, would perform a deed of heroic daring.

For many minutes, not a word was spoken by

the three friends, so completely were they absorbed in the wonderful scene. Then, as he drew a long breath, "Isn't it great?" said Tom, and the spell was broken. "Makes you realize there is great work going on in the world," thoughtfully observed Dick. "It's all wonderfully interesting," agreed Bert, "but what really interests me most is not what is going on on water, but what will be going on on land within a few days."

At his words they wheeled with one accord and fixed their eyes on the land. Careless now of all the harbor sights and sounds, they gave scant heed to the great commercial city with its miles of river harbor. The one great thought that dominated every other was that very soon now their feet would be set on German soil, and then away to Berlin to match American speed and skill against the athletes of the world. For this they had traveled thousands of miles across the sea, and what would be the outcome? victory or defeat? When, the trial ended, they should stand on the deck of this steamer, homeward bound, would it be with hearts swelling with proud triumph, or sinking at the prospect of going home beaten. "Wouldn't you like to know now fellows," breathed Tom, "what's to be the answer?"

"Why," said Bert quietly, "don't you *know?*

It's going to be victory, of course. Anything else is not to be considered for one moment."

"Right-o," said Dick, brightening, "and here and now we cross out the word defeat from our vocabulary and pledge ourselves to win."

With a hand clasp all around to seal the pledge, they took the cabin stairs with one bound as the breakfast gong sounded.

"Well," said Dick, as he seated himself at the table, "our last meal on board. Let's make the most of it."

"Yes," Tom assented with comic seriousness, his face drawn into doleful lines, "for we don't know where we will get the next meal."

"What do you care *where* we get it, as long as we get it?" summed up Dick, as the laugh subsided.

Breakfast over, they stood with the others on deck, waiting only for the checking of the baggage to go ashore. As they waited, the busy harbor again claimed their attention. Six or seven hundred feet away, a large freight steamer was rapidly unloading into a barge that waited at her side. "What do you suppose her freight is?" Bert asked of a gentleman beside him who had been especially chummy with the young Americans. "Oh, it may be anything," laughed his friend. "From silk and linen to dynamite."

"Wow," said Tom, with a comic shiver, "if

it's dynamite, I'm glad we are no nearer to her."

The gentleman smiled, but replied gravely, "It's a very good thing to keep as much distance between you and any form of dynamite as possible."

"Indeed, you are right," said another passenger, a jolly fellow, who had kept them very merry during the voyage with his witty sayings, and his exhaustless fund of funny stories. "Everyone might not be willing to take the chance that Casey did for the sake of getting even. His friend O'Brien had a way of giving him a very vigorous slap on the chest by way of greeting. The blow always came over the breast pocket where Casey carried his cigars, and a number of them had been broken. Casey did not fancy this at all, and a scheme came into his head to get even with O'Brien. He procured a small stick of dynamite and placed it in the pocket with his cigars. Filled with satisfaction, he was walking down the street, chuckling to himself, when he met his friend Dennis. 'Phat's the joke?' asked Dennis. 'Sure,' said Casey, shaking with laughter, and showing Dennis the stick of dynamite in his pocket, 'Oi'm thinkin' of the surprise of O'Brien phwen he hits me.'"

A hearty laugh greeted this story, and it had scarcely subsided when Bert, whose trained sight very little escaped, drew attention to a vast vol-

ume of smoke that was pouring from the stern of the *Falcon,* the steamer that carried the load of dynamite. At the same instant a great confusion broke out on board of her. Sailors came running to the deck, and rushed affrightedly to the rail. The excitement spread to other vessels near at hand.

A tug, one of the largest, ran alongside the *Falcon,* whose crew, pursued by fear, began jumping or tumbling over her side on to the tug's deck. Whistles sounded, and vessels near at hand began drawing away from her with all possible speed.

"She must be on fire," someone said.

"She is," answered Captain Everett, coming up, his face very pale, "and part of her freight, I'm told, is several hundred cases of dynamite. Nothing can save her now. It is only a matter of minutes, or maybe seconds."

At the startling news every face blanched, and every eye was fixed on the fated steamer. It was a scene to stamp itself on the memory of all. The sailors, tumbling pell-mell upon the tug, the crews of the different vessels hurriedly executing sharply uttered commands, the boats scurrying away like a flock of frightened birds.

Sure now that all had been taken from the fated ship, the rescuing tug was steaming rapidly away, when two men suddenly appeared on the

Falcon, and, running to the rail, waved their hands in frantic appeal for rescue.

For a moment or two the tug did not notice the men, but soon the puffing of exhaust pipes grew less noisy and she slowed down. She had seen the two poor unfortunates, and now the same question was in the mind of all. What would the captain of the tug do? What ought he to do? There was no time to land those on board and return. Every second lost meant a lessened chance of going back and making a final safe getaway. If he left the two men to their fate it would look like deliberate cruelty; but, on the other hand, if he went back, he must carry every soul on board into imminent danger of a terrible death. Dared he do it?

A moment she hung undecided, her screw scarcely turning the water at her stern, while all waited with beating hearts. Then she wheeled, and with all steam on hurried back. She moved with great speed, but to the onlookers it seemed as if she crept through the water. Seconds seemed like long minutes, until at last the sailors were safe on deck. Her bow once more pointed to open water, she steamed away toward safety. Not yet did they who had followed her every movement dare to cheer her captain's brave action. She was not yet safe.

One hundred, two, three, four, five, six hundred

feet of water at last stretched between her and the great danger that she had so narrowly escaped.

Now a cheer arose, but scarcely was it heard before it was drowned in a tremendous roar as the *Falcon* sprang bodily from the water. Then a great column of fire a hundred feet high leapt up from the doomed ship. Over this hung a cloud of black smoke which completely hid the vessel from view, while the sea rocked as if with a submarine earthquake. The air was filled with steam and smoke, charred wood, fragments of steel and iron, and flying cases of dynamite. When the smoke cleared, which was not for many minutes, there was not a vestige of the ill-fated *Falcon,* nor of the barge at her side.

Many of the cases of dynamite exploded in the air, seeming to echo the first great, deafening explosion. A number of them narrowly escaped falling on the deck of the gallant little tug that twice had braved destruction. One of them did indeed graze her stern, ripping up some of the planks from her deck, carrying away part of her rail, and throwing down and stunning many of those who crowded her forward deck. It was a narrow escape. Had the explosion occurred a very few minutes sooner many of the cases of dynamite would have fallen on the tug's deck in the midst of her crew and those who had fled to her for safety. No one dared think of the fear-

ful scene of carnage that would have followed.

Many other ships in the harbor barely escaped destruction. A collier was struck by the flying pieces of steel and iron, some of them weighing fifty pounds or more, and her steel plates, nearly an inch in thickness, were pierced and torn in many places. By the very force of the concussion her great smokestacks were crushed flat.

Nor did those on board the *Northland* entirely escape the terrific force of the explosion. Their ship seemed to lift under them, and many were thrown to the deck, but none received any serious hurt.

It is needless to say that thought of their own affairs had been banished from the minds of all on board during this scene of awful confusion and mortal peril; but it had passed.

As once more the great river settled into calm, the work of debarkation went on. A little while and our young travelers, still thrilling with the excitement of the scene through which they had just passed, found themselves at last on German soil.

The afternoon was very delightfully spent in "doing" Hamburg town, and the next morning, after a quiet night at the hotel, the train bore them onward toward Berlin, and the fulfillment, as they believed, of all their hopes.

Knowing that the morning papers would have

a full story of the harbor disaster, everyone straightway possessed himself of a copy, and settled himself eagerly to read the account. In consequence, it was a very quiet carful of people as they scanned the columns with their glaring headlines. Our three college boys, like all the others, had a fair knowledge of the German language, but it was not so easily nor so quickly read as English, and so eager were they to learn the full extent of the disaster that they were very glad to accept the offer of one of their party, who was a native German, to translate for them.

Soon startled exclamations broke forth, as they learned that for a distance of twelve miles windows were broken and chimneys demolished, tall steel-framed office buildings shaken to their foundations, and thousands of people had been in panic from fear of earthquake. In amazement they heard that great pieces of steel weighing fifty pounds had been found three or four miles from the harbor, and that the shock was felt a hundred miles away.

"Well," said Drake, as he folded up his paper at last, "the wonder is that there was a single ship left in the harbor, and that we did not all go to the bottom of the river. I don't see what saved us, anyway."

It was not to be wondered at that they could talk of nothing else during the greater part of

the journey, but as the train neared their goal, the much-talked-and-thought-of city of Berlin, there was a sudden reaction from seriousness to gaiety. It is not in boy nature to look long on the dark side of things, and it was a hilarious party of young Americans that descended from the train, and wended their way along the streets of the German city, that till now had only existed for them between the covers of a geography.

German talk, German faces, German costumes were all about them, and ears and eyes were kept very busy with the new sights and sounds.

"Now, Tom," chaffed Bert, as at the hotel they prepared for dinner, "trot out your German."

"Ach ja," responded Tom, obligingly. "Was wilst du? Du bist ferricht, mein kind? Ich habe kein geld? Oder wilst du die Lorelei haben? Ach, wohl, hier es ist,

"'Ich weiss nicht was soll ist bedeuten,
Das ich so traurig bin,
Ein mahrchen aus alten zeiten,
Das kommt mir nicht aus dem sinn.
Die luft ist——'"

At this point in the quaint German legend Tom's breath left him as he felt himself lifted bodily from his feet and laid upon the bed, with

his mouth bound about with a towel snatched from the washstand. Not until he had, by repeated inclinations of his bandaged head, promised "to make no attempt to finish the Lorelei," and to give them his so-called German in "as small doses and at as large intervals as possible," was he released.

"Ah, well," said he, when he was free, "such is the gratitude and appreciation of so-called friends."

Peace restored, the three friends went down to dinner, softly humming, each in a different key,

"Ach, du liebe Augustine."

CHAPTER XVI

The Starry Banner

THE boys were all up early on the day when the Olympic games were to begin. They were thrilling with excitement like that of young soldiers on the verge of their first battle. Here at last was the goal of their ambition, the day they had looked forward to through weary months of effort, the end of their journey from one continent to another, the final port after the long voyage overseas. Here they were to pit themselves against the best the world could offer. From here the cable was to flash to waiting friends at home the news of victory or defeat. And they solemnly vowed it should not be defeat.

Berlin was awake, too. The great city, rising like a giant refreshed after sleep, was full of stir and movement. The very air seemed electrified with a sense of something great impending. From early dawn the streets had resounded with bugle calls, as the troops that were to take part in the great review preceding the games took up their position. Staff officers in their gorgeous uniforms were dashing to and fro, and the pave-

ments echoed back the measured tread of the infantry and the clatter of the cavalry. Flags and bunting fluttered everywhere. Excursion trains brought in enormous crowds from other cities to swell the swarming population of the capital. A general holiday had been proclaimed and all Berlin was out of doors.

And these vast crowds were swayed not only by enthusiasm but by hope. At last the German eagle was to have a chance to scream. The Fatherland had not fared any too well at previous Olympic meets. The first prizes that had fallen to German athletes had been few and far between. It was not that they lacked pluck and brawn. This they had in plenty. But they had not made a specialty of field and track events and they had been forced to stand aside and see England and America make almost a clean sweep at every meet.

But in the four years that had elapsed since the last games they had thrown themselves into the strife with all the thoroughness and earnestness that were their national characteristics. Not if they could help it would they fail of winning in their own capital with the whole world looking on. Sport had become a national craze, and training, like everything else with the Germans, had been reduced to a science.

The Emperor himself had rushed into the

movement with his well-known dash and vigor. He was determined that "where Germany sat should be the head of the table." He had issued orders to his army officers that whenever they espied in the ranks a promising candidate he should be given every opportunity for development; and in more than one case he had relieved him altogether from military service in order that he might devote himself to his specialty. He had hung up costly trophies to be battled for and had attended many of the meets in person. His own son, Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, was a winner in the elimination sprints, and would be one of the Olympic contenders. Everywhere there was a spirit of deadly earnestness such as had brought Germany to the fore in so many fields of learning and music and commerce. There were rumors flying about of marvelous records made in practice, of wonderful "phenoms" to be uncovered when the time came. And Reddy voiced what was coming to be a general opinion in the American quarters, that "It's them blamed Dutchmen we've got to beat."

Not that this scared Uncle Sam's boys in the slightest degree. They sniffed the battle from afar like young war horses, and the prospect of stiff competition only added zest to the coming strife. The fiercer the struggle the more glorious the victory. As Bert put it: "They didn't want

a procession; they wanted a race." All foes looked alike to them and they faced the issue with a buoyant confidence that was not mere bravado, but based on indomitable courage and self-reliance. If they were beaten—and it stood to reason that in some events they would be—their opponents in every case would have to earn the victory and they would surely know they had been in a fight.

The fight idea was emphasized by the great military review that passed before the Emperor. The crack regiments of the finest army in Europe, marching with the precision of clockwork, made up a parade miles in length. Every arm of the service was represented—the grim Krupp artillery rumbling along like thunder, the solid ranks of the infantry moving as one man, the splendid Uhlans and Hussars, superbly mounted. It was a shrewd move on the part of the Emperor—whom Dick described as "the best advertising man in Europe"—thus to impress visitors from all parts of the world with the martial pomp and power of the German Empire. While these were to be games of friendly rivalry, and admitting that "Peace hath its victories no less renowned than War," he figured that it would do no harm to give a quiet hint that, whether in peace or war, the Fatherland was prepared to meet all comers. And the shower of cheers that greeted the troops

along the line of march attested the pride felt in their army by the entire nation.

After the review came luncheon, at which the Kaiser entertained the Committeemen of the various nations, and shortly afterward the tide set in toward the Stadium, where the opening exercises were to be held that afternoon.

A murmur of admiration rose from the spectators as they poured in the gates of the magnificent structure. The builders had fairly outdone themselves. It was a crystallized dream. The most brilliant architects in Germany had been summoned to its construction and given a free hand in the matter of expense. As a result, they had erected the finest building in the world designed for athletic sports. Arranged in the form of an ellipse, it extended like a giant horseshoe over fifty acres. The arena itself was open to the sky, but the seats, rising tier on tier in endless rows, were under cover. The massive walls, made of granite, were adorned with statues of German heroes, and high over all towered a colossal figure of Germania. The entrances were flanked by mighty towers and beneath the seats was an enormous corridor with dressing rooms, shower baths and every appliance for the comfort of the athletes. In the center of the vast arena was the field for the throwing and jumping competitions, and circling this was the running track

for the racers. Nothing had been overlooked, nothing neglected. The builders had been able to profit by the mistakes or omissions of other nations where meets had been held and they had reared a structure that was the "last word" for beauty and utility.

Through every entrance in one unending stream poured the crowds of spectators. Thousands upon thousands, they packed the tiers of seats until they overflowed. And still they kept coming.

The Emperor sat in the royal box, surrounded by his family and a glittering staff. At a given signal the bands started up the "Wacht am Rhein." The vast multitude rose to their feet and stood with uncovered heads. Then the choral societies took up the famous hymn, "A Strong Fortress Is Our God." The noble music swept over the field and stirred all German hearts with deep emotion.

Then from the pavilions, each delegation carrying its national flag, came the athletes, four thousand in number. They marched in serried ranks down the field and lined up in front of the royal enclosure. Bronzed, supple, straight as arrows, they made a magnificent picture. The Crown Prince introduced them in a body to his father in a few well-chosen words, and the Emperor made one of his characteristic speeches in

reply. At its conclusion he waved his hand, the ranks disbanded, a hurricane of cheers rent the air, and the greatest of Olympic meets was on.

For ten days the struggle went on with varying fortunes. Every event was fiercely contested. Nothing could be counted on certainly in advance. Many "good things" went wrong, while others who had only been supposed to have an outside chance carried off the prize. With every day that passed, it became more evident, as the pendulum swung from side to side, that the result would be in doubt almost to the last. They fought like wildcats, ran like deer and held on like bulldogs. It was a "fight for keeps" from start to finish.

In the rifle and revolver competitions, the Americans swept the boards. At every range and every target they were invincible. Crack shots from all over Europe tried in vain to rival their scores. They were from the land of Davy Crockett and there was nothing left for their opponents but to follow the example of the historic coon and "come down."

In the hundred yard dash, the Americans ran one two three. There was a separate lane for each runner so that no one could interfere with another. The timing was by electricity and did away with any possibility of mistake. The crack of the pistol started the watch and the breaking

of the tape at the finish stopped it. The system did away with all disputes and helped immensely in promoting the friendly feeling that prevailed throughout the games.

Five points were given to the winner in each event, three to the second and one to the third. So that no matter which nation won the first, another might win the second or third or both, and thus keep within striking distance in the general score.

From the first day, the American score began to climb. But the Germans and Swedes and English were climbing, too, and it became clear that it was not to be, as in previous meets, a walk-over for the Stars and Stripes.

In the field and track events—what we understand in this country by athletics—the Americans were vastly superior. The broad jump was theirs, the pole vaulting, the hurdles, the four hundred metres and fifteen hundred metres runs. Drake won the discus throw and Snyder hurled the hammer further than it had ever gone before.

But there were other features in which we had but few representatives, and in some none at all. The archery shooting went to England. The javelin casting with both hands was won by a gigantic Swede. The horsemanship contest was carried off by officers of the German cavalry. France took the lead in fencing and Canada captured the long-distance walk. The horizontal

bar work of the Germans was far and away the best, and her beef and brawn gathered in the tug of war. In the bicycle race Italy came in first, and we had to be content with second and third.

All these events swelled the foreigner's score, and although America captured the Pentathlon and Decathlon for all round excellence, her lead on the tenth day was threatened by Germany and Sweden who were close behind.

"'Twill be no two to one this time," Reddy grumbled. "'Tis glad I'll be if we come out ahead by the skin of our teeth. We can't seem to shake them fellers off. They hang on like leeches. I'm thinking, Wilson, 'twill be up to you to grab that Marathon, if we're to go back to God's country with colors flying and our heads held high."

And Reddy was so true a prophet that when at last the momentous day came for the Marathon race, the German boar was gnashing his tusks at the American eagle. Only two points behind, he came plunging along, and victory for either depended on who won the Marathon.

The day before the race a package was delivered to Bert at his hotel. It bore the American postmark and he looked at it curiously. Within was a letter from Mr. Hollis and a little roll of bunting. Bert unrolled it. It was a torn and tattered American flag bearing the marks of flames and bullets. Across it had been stamped

in golden letters: "We have met the enemy and they are ours."

"I've had it a long time in my historical collection," Mr. Hollis had written. "It's the identical flag that Perry flew in the battle of Lake Erie. I've had his immortal words stamped on it. It saw one glorious victory won for America. I want it to see another. I loan this to you to tie in a sash about your waist when you run the Marathon. I'm banking on you, Bert, my boy. Go in and win."

Bert touched it lovingly, reverently. A lump rose in his throat. "I'll wear it," he said, "and I'll win with it."

CHAPTER XVII

A Glorious Victory

IT was a perfect day for the great race that was to settle the long-distance championship of the world. The sun shone brightly, but not too hotly, and there was a light breeze sufficient to cool the runners, but not retard their progress.

The Marathon was to start at three in the afternoon at a point twenty-six miles away from the Stadium. The most detailed preparations had been made for the event. The distance had been carefully measured off by expert surveyors, and policed from end to end in order to keep a clear path for the racers and see that the rules were strictly observed. At every hundred feet stood a group of soldiers. All traffic had been suspended by an imperial order. An ambulance, with Red Cross doctors and nurses, was to follow and pick up any who might fall out or be overcome with exhaustion.

The contestants had been taken to the starting point in automobiles the night before, so that they might get a good night's sleep and be in prime condition. Now the temporary training quarters were humming with bustle and excitement. The

last bath and rubdown and kneading of the muscles were over and the final words of caution and encouragement spoken, as the fellows lined up in readiness for the starter's pistol.

Bert, in superb condition, his skin glowing, his muscles rippling, shook hands with his friends, as he stood waiting for the start.

"For the good old college, Bert," said Drake.

"For the team," barked Reddy.

"For the flag," said Tom.

"For America," added Dick.

"I'll remember," answered Bert, as he touched the flag at his waist, and the look came into his eyes that they had learned to know.

A moment's breathless silence, while over a hundred trained athletes watched the starter, as he looked along the waiting line and slowly raised his pistol. A shot, a tremendous roar from the crowd a rush of feet like a stampede of steers and they were off. A moment later Berlin knew that they had started. Five minutes later, all Europe knew it. Ten minutes later, America knew it. Two continents were watching the race, and beneath the gaze of these invisible witnesses the runners bounded on. All types were there; brawny Germans, giant Swedes, stolid Englishmen, rangy Canadians, dapper Frenchmen, swarthy Italians, lithe Americans—each one bound to win or go down fighting.

At first the going was rather hard on account of the great number of contenders. They got in each other's way. They were like a herd of fleeing deer, treading on each other's heels.

Bert's first impulse was to get out in front. Like every thoroughbred, he hated to have anyone show him the way. The sight of a runner ahead was like a red rag to a bull. But he restrained himself. If he were to win that race, he must use his brains as well as his legs. What use to waste his strength by trying to thread his way through those flying feet? Let them make the pace. By and by they would string out and the path would clear. In the meantime he would keep within striking distance.

As he ran on easily, Thornton ranged alongside.

"May I go with you, my pretty maid?" he grinned.

"You may if you like, kind sir, she said," retorted Bert.

"We must make it one, two, three for America, to-day," went on Thornton.

"That's the way to talk," replied Bert, and then, as breath was precious, they subsided.

The course led uphill and down, over country roads and through villages whose quaint beauty would have appealed to Bert under other circumstances. But to-day he had no eye for scenery,

no thought of anything but the road that stretched before him like a ribbon, and the Stadium, so many miles away.

Five miles, ten, and the pace began to tell. Some had dropped out altogether and others were staggering. The sheep were being separated from the goats. The real runners were ranging up in front, watching each other like hawks, intent on seizing any advantage. Most of them by this time had found their second wind and settled into their stride. Some were running on a schedule and paid no attention to their competitors, serenely confident that in the long run their plan would carry them through.

But Bert had no use for schedules. To him they were like the schemes to break the bank at Monte Carlo, infallible on paper, but falling down sadly when put to the test. As he had told Tom on an earlier occasion, "it was men, not time, that he had to beat." So he kept a wary eye on the men in front and sped along with that easy swinging lope that seemed so easy to beat until one tried to do it.

Now fifteen miles had been covered and Bert let out a link. It would not do to wait too long before challenging the leaders. Dorner, the German, and Boudin, the Frenchman, were already far enough ahead to make him feel a trifle uneasy. Hallowell too and the Indian were a quar-

ter of a mile in front and showed no signs of wavering. Now was the time to wear them down. Almost insensibly he lengthened his stride and with every leap decreased the distance. The crowd that lined the road, quick to detect the spurt, hailed him with cheers as he sped past, and the men in front, sensing danger, themselves put on extra speed and battled to retain the lead.

And now, Nature took a hand. A thunder storm that had been brewing for a half hour past, broke suddenly at the eighteenth mile, and the rain came down in torrents. It beat against their faces and drenched them to the skin. It cooled and refreshed their heated bodies, but it made the footing slippery and uncertain. It taxed, too, their strength and vitality, already strained to the utmost.

In the wild tumult of the elements, Bert exulted. The thunder roared, the lightning flashed, and his own spirit shouted in unison. It appealed to something primitive and elemental in his nature. And as he ran on in the gathering darkness, the vivid lightning playing in blinding flashes about his lithe figure and tossing hair, he seemed like a faun or a young god in the morning of the world, rather than a product of the twentieth century.

But he was quickly enough brought back to

reality. He had overhauled Hallowell and the Indian, and set sail for the French and German runners, when, just as he dashed round the foot of a hill, he slipped on the wet going and swerved against a rock at the edge of the road. A keen pain shot through his foot, and he saw to his dismay that his right shoe had been slit from end to end by the sharp edge of the rock. The injury to the foot was only a scratch, but, when he tried to run, the shoe flapped loosely and threatened to throw him. A great fear came upon him, and his heart turned sick.

In the meantime, Reddy and the boys had ridden back by another road to Berlin. The trainer dropped Tom and Dick at the Stadium and then whirled back to the hotel. Here the American band was quartered and down this street the runners were to pass. Reddy sought out the leader. A short conference and the band gathered in full force on the balcony overlooking the street.

Reddy glanced at his watch. They must be coming now. The leader poised his baton expectantly.

"Wait," said Reddy confidently, "till the first one gets abreast of the hotel. Then let her go for all you're worth."

Minutes passed that seemed like hours. Then there was a stir among the crowds, a craning of necks, a murmur growing into a roar, and the

leading runner came in sight. Reddy took one look and turned pale. The leader lifted his baton as the runner drew nearer.

"Not yet," cried Reddy, clutching at him fiercely. "Not yet."

A second runner appeared and then a third.

"Not yet," groaned Reddy. "O, hivins, not yet."

Then down the street came a flying figure. Reddy needed no second glance. He knew that giant stride, those plunging leaps. On he came like a thunderbolt, and the crowd drew back as though from a runaway horse.

"Now," screamed Reddy. "Now."

And in one great crash the band broke out into the glorious strains of "The Star Spangled Banner."

Bert lifted his head. The music poured through his veins like liquid fire and his heart almost leaped from his body. His strength had been oozing away, his breath was coming in sobs. His shoes had been torn off and cast aside, his bruised feet tortured him at every stride, and every ounce of power had been cruelly taxed in the effort to close up the gap caused by the accident. Now he was running on his nerve. And just at this moment, like an electric shock to his ebbing strength, came the thrilling strains that might have stirred the dead:

"The Star Spangled Banner, oh, long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave."

The flag, his flag, "Old Glory," never stained by defeat since it was flung to the breeze, victorious in every war for a hundred years, its shining stars undimmed by time, the pride and boast of the greatest country on God's green earth! His feverish fingers touched the sash at his waist. "We have met the enemy and they are ours." The Star-Spangled Banner!

Now he was running like a man possessed. Gone was pain, gone were bruises, gone the deadly weariness that dragged him down. His feet had wings. His heart sang. His eyes shone. He seemed inspired by superhuman strength. Like an arrow he shot past the Frenchman who was staggering on gamely, and step by step he gained on Dorner, the gallant German, who had been dubbed by his admirers "The Flying Dutchman."

Flying he certainly was, spurred on by the wild yells of the German crowds, mad with joy at seeing their colors in front. But the shouts died down as Bert slipped by like a shadow, relentless as fate, close on the heels of the leader, grimly fighting for every inch.

And now the Stadium loomed up, gay with

flaunting flags, and packed to the doors with a countless multitude wild with excitement. The word had been flashed along that a German was leading, and the crowds were on their feet, screaming like madmen. The Emperor and royal family, all ceremony thrown aside, were standing and shouting like the rest. The American contingent, despair eating at their hearts, sat glum and silent.

The twenty-six miles had been measured to end at the very doors, and the remaining three hundred and eighty-five yards of the Marathon distance was in the Stadium itself. Dorner entered first and Pandemonium reigned. Then a second figure shot through, running like the wind, at his belt the Stars and Stripes. And now it was America's turn to yell!

Down the stretch they came, see-sawing for the lead. Before them gleamed the tape that marked the finish. No one had ever yet broken that tape ahead of Bert in a race. He swore that no one should do it now.

Nearer and nearer. What was it the fellows had said? "For the college." "For the team." "For the flag." "For America." He nerved himself for the last desperate spurt. Once more he called on the stout heart that had never failed him yet. A series of panther-like bounds, one wild tremendous leap and he snapped the tape.

Again America had matched its best against the world, and again America had conquered!

. . . . .

It was a jubilant crowd that made the return voyage on the *Northland,* in the words of Tom, "one continuous joy ride." Training was over, the strain relaxed, the victory won. It had been a tussle from start to finish, but they had carried off the prize and one more series of Olympic games had been placed to Uncle Sam's credit. Thornton, Hallowell, Texanima, Brady and Casey had finished among the first ten and shared with Bert the honors of the Marathon. The Emperor himself had placed the laurel crown on Bert's head, and, as Dick said, proved himself "a dead game sport" by the gracious words with which he veiled his disappointment. Cable messages had poured in on Bert by the score, but none so pleasing as the one from Mr. Hollis: "You ran a magnificent race, my boy. The Perry flag is yours."

And now they were on their way home with their hard-won trophies—home to an exulting country, whose glory they had upheld and which stood impatient to greet them with rousing cheers and open arms and all the honors a grateful nation could bestow.

The praises rained on Bert had left him as natural and unspoiled as ever. To him the whole

thing was simple. A task had been put before him and he had done it. That was all.

"'Twas me that did it," joked Reddy, "me and the band."

"Sure," laughed Dick, "though of course Bert's wind and speed counted for something."

"To say nothing of his grit and nerve," chimed in Tom.

"'Twas this that did it," added Bert, as he reverently unfolded the faded battle flag that had waved over Perry's glorious squadron, "Running with this, I couldn't lose."

On other fields of struggle and achievement that flag was to be his inspiration. How fully he honored it, how nobly he fought for it, how stainless he kept it will be told in

"BERT WILSON AT PANAMA."

THE END